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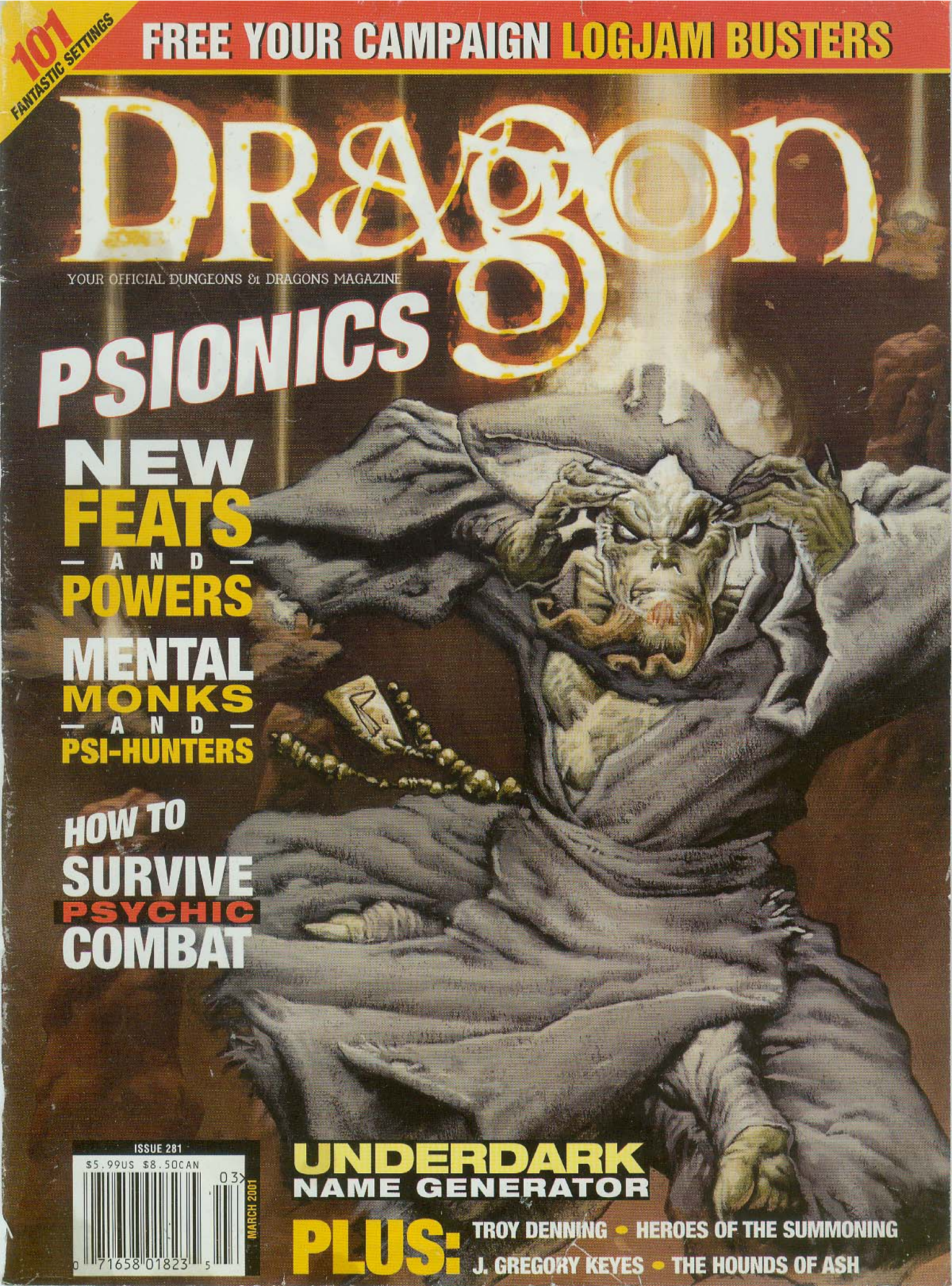

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Dragon Issue 281
March 2001

GAME ROOM

What's new, what's happening, and what's on your mind.

Wyrm's Turn 6
Scale Mail 8
Profiles 12
Up On A Soapbox 15
Previews 16
Countdown 18
Convention Calendar 20

FEATURES

New rules, campaigns, and idea generators.

Mind Lords of Talaron 24
Stephen Kenson

Calm Amid the Storm 32
Bruce R. Cordell

The Splintered Mind 38
Jesse Decker, Will McDermott, & Stephen Schubert

By Any Other Name: Races of the Underdark 46
Owen K.C. Stephens

101 Wondrous Whereabouts 50
E.W. Morton

Logjam Busters 57
Robin D. Laws

The Hounds of Ash 62
J. Gregory Keyes

FAMILIARS

Humor, puzzles, monsters, magic, and more.

Dork Tower 22
Mind Flayers 72
Dragonmirth 73
Vs. 74
New Adventures of Volo 76
Rogues Gallery 79
Class Acts 84
Bazaar of the Bizarre 86
Bestiary 90
Nodwick 96
What's New 114

WIZARD'S WORKSHOP

Tools, tricks, and tactics to improve your game.

Role Models 98
The Play's the Thing 100
Sage Advice 102
Forum 106
PC Portraits 110
Dungeoncraft 111

There are few stranger things one can do than inject psionics into a campaign. No-contact mental warfare may not sound like a warrior's idea of fun. However, that warrior might like the idea of being able to walk into a nest of rogues armed with nothing but gray matter and feeling quite confident.

Paolo Parente explores some of this power with his interpretation of githzerai monks meditating in Limbo. One gets the distinct impression that we weren't invited to the party.

–Peter Whitley, Art Director

PSI OF RELIEF

Like many other players of the original AD&D rules, I insisted that my DM let me roll for psionic powers—then whined along with the others until he let us re-roll again and again until, at last, my character was one of the chosen few. It didn't take me long to realize my mistake. Even at the tender age of thirteen, I had a dim awareness that the psionics rules were a bit unbalanced—or rather, they were balanced only by rarity, a restriction we'd neatly avoided. Still, as long as my character was on the heavy side of the scales of game balance, I quit whining.

Later, as a DM, I found psionics less and less attractive. They used a completely different mechanic from magic, and those characters (and monsters) who had psionic powers tended to destroy those who didn't within a few short rounds. After a few frustrating encounters that left cherished PCs or NPCs dead before the first sword was drawn, I finally banished psionics from my campaign.

When the 2nd Edition psionics rules appeared, my gaming group was wary of the *Psionics Handbook* until DARK SUN lured us back to try them. Since everyone in that campaign had at least a wild talent, and because the new rules were better balanced and more comprehensive, psionics weren't as capricious and game-threatening as they had been before.

Still, outside of the world of Athas, we were not too keen on bringing what we saw as a new form of magic under an alias into our fantasy campaigns. To us, psionics seemed to belong more to science fiction than to fantasy, and having mental powers compete with arcane magic diminished the sense of magic that we liked in our campaign. With few exceptions, players wanting to try a psionicist were gently but firmly persuaded to play a wizard instead.

Thus, it was with a certain indifference that I followed the progress of the new iteration of the psionics rules. After listening to weeks of war stories from the guys who were playtesting the new rules, I finally got curious enough to take a peek at the manuscript. At last, here was a system that made me want to use psionics in a fantasy campaign.

Not only are the rules based on the core mechanic of the new D&D game, but psionics and magic interact much more naturally—unless the DM prefers the "Psionics are Different" variant in the new *Psionics Handbook*. Now I need to decide whether to treat psionic powers as something separate from magic or as a third *form* of it, giving players yet another way to create magic-using characters within the same core rules.

Now that you've had a chance to see the new psionics rules, how will you use them in your campaign? Have your players already added psions and psychic warriors to the party? Or have their characters multiclassed into these classes? How are you using the nasty new (and revised old) monsters from the *Psionics Handbook*? Have you created your own?

Drop us a note to tell us all about psionics in your game—or, better yet, send us an article proposal adding to the new feats, powers, items, and monsters. If we see enough good submissions, another psionics issue can't be too far away.

Dave Gross • Editor-in-Chief

DRAGON

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This month's letters start with a bang, as two titans of gaming slug it out in the eternal struggle between law and chaos. Who will prevail? That's for you to decide, gentle reader. Send us an email or a postcard in support of your champion, and we'll print the most interesting opinions right here.

How To Play the Game

It's with some regret that my first letter to your magazine was prompted by something negative, for I really like *Dragon Magazine*. I think it offers wonderful advice and game material on a monthly basis. That is why I was surprised when I read Tracy Hickman's "How You Play the Game" article in issue #277.

I strongly disagree with some of the positions Tracy takes, and while I admire the goal of encouraging people to have more fun with their game, I think his methods do much more harm than good. In fact, much of the advice in the article is a blueprint on how to create a player who is the bane of both the DM and the rest of the group.

The article starts out with a story of how an adventuring party was trying to figure out the runes in a room and a barbarian character got bored and started fights with nearby monsters, which ended up killing a number of PCs. This is meant to be something desirable? To my thinking, this is hardly different than coming upon two friends playing chess, getting bored while watching them enjoy their game, and tipping over the board to watch the pieces fly, because that would be more fun—the game's players be damned. Disrupting other people's fun because you are bored perhaps suggests that you should switch playing groups, but it certainly does not give you license to forcibly impose your will on others.

Later on in the article, particularly in the section, "Take charge of your own destiny" the article's advice really goes wrong. "The appeal of roleplaying games is that they forge camaraderie and encourage cooperative endeavors." So far so good, but it goes on: "But if the result is not heroic, then it's time to take matters out of the hands of the committee." This is tantamount to saying, "the opinion of the others in the group doesn't matter if they don't agree with what you want to do."

Tracy's article seems to take the position that rather than reacting to the situations put forth by the DM, a player should just think of crazy things to do and act upon them. This attitude is damaging to the game because it discourages rather than encourages a DM to prepare an interesting and thrilling adventure—because the troublesome player will ignore or wreck it all anyway. Worse still, in my opinion, the article states "If you find yourself facing a puzzle to which you cannot figure out the answer . . . walk away from the entire adventure. I bet your DM will somehow get you the necessary clues to get you the past that 'impenetrable' puzzle." I'm horrified at the suggestion that players might hold the game hostage until the DM gives them what they want. That's no way to play a roleplaying game. In my own games, such a player would be asked to leave—or simply not invited to return (an action I don't take lightly—it's something I've only done twice in 22 years of DMing).

The rest of the article contains some valuable and thoughtful advice. I agree with Tracy's suggestions for creating interesting character backgrounds, interacting with NPCs, and using dramatic flair when roleplaying (although I believe that it is okay that not everyone's going to want to play a swashbuckler with flourish and panache).

It doesn't change the fact that the article does damage to the game. A section unfortunately trimmed from Chapter One of the new *Dungeon Master's Guide* due to space dealt with "player types" that described various kinds of players and their approach to the game, encouraging the DM to embrace multiple play styles (although this is addressed somewhat on page 8-9 of that book in the section

"Determining Style of Play.") The "troublemaker" player type is one that ignores the actual events in the game and just does whatever he can think of that will mess with or hurt the other players and disrupt the DM's planned adventure. In the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, it was listed as one of the very few types to arduously avoid. This article creates "troublemaker" players. I hope no one follows this advice.

Monte Cook • Senior Designer
Wizards of the Coast RPG R&D

Viva la Revolution!

I am flattered at the notion that an old gamer like myself, with a stroke of my keyboard, seems to have threatened the foundations of roleplaying across the multiverse. Cool! Who knew?

Unfortunately, Mr. Cook seems to have missed my point: that complacent games—and complacent gamers—need to be shaken up from time to time. In real life, great ideas and visions often die a slow death being "bogged down in committee." The same can be said for heroic action in roleplaying games.

Monte seems to see D&D as another form of chess, a set of rules where the outcome is determined through a contest of intellectual manipulation of conflicting mathematical probabilities. I see D&D as simulation of a fantasy environment in which the heroes of our imagination attain some measure of life. This goes beyond probability rolls, charts, and tables. Monte seems to take a Newtonian approach; I lean more toward chaos theory.

I realize that the approach of my article is radical and, to a certain kind of DM, downright threatening. Imagine the audacity of mere *players* thinking that they have an active role in a roleplaying game! Monte states my position as "rather than reacting to the situations put forth by the DM, a player should just think of crazy things to do and act upon them." My actual position is more accurately stated as follows: "rather than merely reacting to the situations put forth by the DM, a player should *act* like the hero his character is supposed to portray."

As to player's holding the game hostage, how is this any different from DMs holding their players hostage in a bad game? If the game design is flawed or the DM is not properly doing his or her job, why not just walk away? Why toss away an afternoon trying to solve a puzzle when the DM has not provided you with the means or information to solve it? In my seminars, I emphasize the need for DMs to listen to their players to understand what the DM is doing right and what the DM is doing wrong. If your DM has his head in his rulebook, he might need a message that is *very* loud and very strong.

I am in complete agreement with Monte concerning "troublemaker" players in games, as he defines them. If you, as a player, think that my article is a license to become a "troublemaker" in your game, then you have also missed my point: Troublemakers are anarchists and should be stomped out.

I am advocating something else: "revolutionist" as a player type. Revolutionist players pay attention to the background and events in the game and *act* on them. Revolutionist players play their heroic character rather than the game rules. Revolutionist players know when a DM is leading their PC around by the nose and laugh in the face of such tyranny. Revolutionist players are the McGyvers of the game rules, using them in unexpected ways. Revolutionist players cooperate with other players but boldly go—and boldly die—when others quiver in fear or are locked in committee debate.

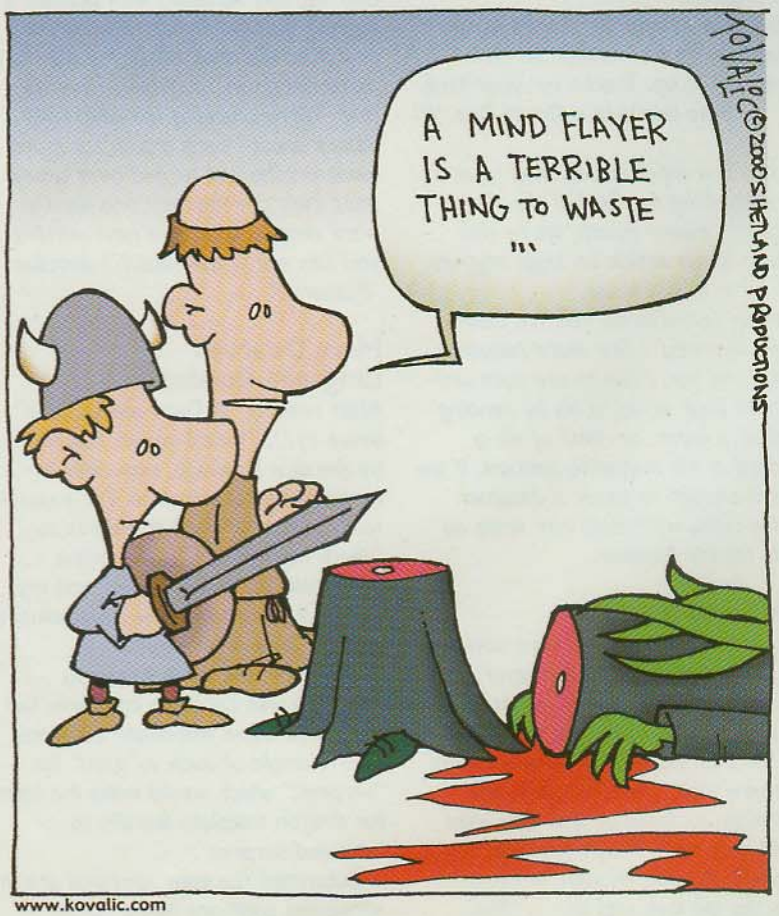
Revolutionist players are terrifying to DMs who are unprepared for them. They require the DM to demonstrate the same cooperation with players that the DM has traditionally enforced among the players. This, perhaps, is the most important and frightening concept of all.

Roleplaying games might have a lot of dice and rules, but they are first and foremost about roleplaying. Ironically, Monte's team did a wonderful job of doing that very thing. The new edition is a magnificent achievement and has brought back, for me, the magic that once was D&D. I wish I could get my copy signed by Monte's team.

My article might create trouble for DMs, but it does not create troublemakers. The point of being a revolutionist player is to take back the experience from the realm of "running a game" and put it firmly back in the realm of "having an adventure." Players of the world: unite!

Tracy Hickman • Game Designer
NYT Best-Selling Author

THE UNSPEAKABLE OAF **by John Kovalic**



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Out-of-Print, Out-of Mind?

Greetings to the staff at *Dragon Magazine* and congratulations on a job well done!

First, let me say that this publication gets better every month and, after buying it from a news stand on and off for upwards of ten years , I was recently impressed enough to subscribe.

The new edition of D&D is well done but lacks in some areas. The first is the failure to support campaign worlds now lost to those of us who remained devoted to them after their demise. This has caused heated debates around my gaming table about conversions and what not, especially concerning character races and skills. Could you find it in your hearts to help us out and publish an article about lost character races and skills, particularly those from Dark Sun and Spelljammer? These worlds were very cool and lots of fun.

Another hole in the new rules involves siege engines. No mention is made of these wonderful toys of destruction. I have had fun with catapults and the like as a player and as a DM. Would you consider publishing an article containing optional rules for siege engines?

You have a done terrific job in supplementing the new edition so far. Please keep it up. Thanks for your time.

Pete Beaumia • Green Bay, WI

In just a few more issues, we'll have a little something for fans of the classic campaigns every month. We're also working on an article on siege engines. Look for it this summer.

For big features on inactive campaigns, we need a few more requests. If, like Pete, you'd like to see such articles, add your voice to his by sending us email, a letter, or–best of all–a postcard at the magazine address. If we receive enough to paper a designer into his cube, we'll make him write an article for his freedom.

Let's See Some Cities

First of all, keep it up. I'm sure you guys are already aware that your magazine is selling many more issues now than it ever has. There are many reasons for that, but I'm sure one of them is the new look. I love the new look. Don't listen to those people who want the old look back. They'll get used to the new look soon enough. In retrospect, the old look was so . . . '80s.

Keep up the prestige class per month article. I love it. The *Dragon Annual* was especially good with (if I counted correctly) three prestige classes. Not bad! I also want the necromancer prestige class. How about it?

I suggest you start monthly articles on generic city sites. For example one month you write about a local tavern in a generic city. Give details on its regulars, barmaids, suppliers . . . whatever (as long as they are interesting and of some game value of course). Next month a local inn. Then perhaps a smith, a wizard's tower, a temple to the god of death, war, winter, luck, the mayor's mansion, the thieves' guild, the university, and so on. This would be a great regular feature and in many respects could almost be a mini-adventure, with adventure seeds, new items, spells etc.

I love the Greyhawk monsters you have included in each issue. Keep it up. I know that traditionally the RPGA publication should be *the* source for Greyhawk material but it's good to see it in *Dragon* as well.

John Peralta • Address Withheld

Thanks for the suggestions, John. Starting this summer, we'll present a regular feature similar to what you describe. We think it'll fit the bill. As for more Greyhawk monsters, have no fear. We're cracking the whip over James Jacobs each month for more monsters (he just turned over a new one). He's not the only one hard at work designing bizarre new critters, as you can see in this month's peculiar "Bestiary."

More Dwarven Language Goodness

After reading "A Dwarven Lexicon" (Issue 278), I found myself fascinated by the new language, especially in terms of its construction. For example, tomb (mornludrukar) translates to "death earth home," adamantine (grumdek) to "strong steel," and my personal favorite, arrow (tanthanus) is literally "bow small sword."

Naturally, the guide to pidgin Dwarven was far from complete, but it suggested some immediate additions. One example of such is "garn" for "serpent," which would make the term for dragon translate literally to "shielded serpent."

Submitted for your approval are my suggested additions so far to the Dwarven lexicon, which is sure to grow in every dwarfocentric DM's world. Thanks for giving us all a great start!

Dwarven = Common

- ar = container
- argos = vehicle (container go)
- aurang = platinum (gold silver)
- aurto = lie / deceit (gold not/fool's gold)
- azandin = moon (night god)
- born = hole
- clang = father
- dar = light
- darnus = lightning (light sword)
- din = god (Clangeddin = father battle god)
- garn = serpent
- glosdin = sun (day god)
- grenazandin = crazy / insanity (moon poison)
- kan = sight/see
- karkan = vision (far see)
- lend = favor
- mora = life (Moradin = Life god)
- mosremmot = confusion (no comprehend)
- mot = pierce, understand
- mun = curse
- nak = word
- narn = power
- ner = circle
- nyrborn = wound (axe hole)
- os = by, adjacent
- remmot = comprehend
- remog = thick skinned (speak armor)
- rosnak = insult
- sam = heavens/sky
- samged = thunder (sky battle)
- sen = sweet
- senklar = pastry
- senklardeg = treasure (pastry mustard)
- to = false / not
- zarn = kill/slay

Keep up the great work on the new *Dragon!*

Michael Petersen
College Station, TX

We approve, Michael, and we hope other readers will send in their own additions to the nonhuman languages.

Thanks to the hundreds of readers who sent us praise, requests, criticism, questions, or glossaries this month. Keep the letters coming, and don't forget to visit us online in the Wizards of the Coast chat rooms on the first Friday of each month.

Join us again in thirty days for what promises to be the wackiest April issue in years. D

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KEEPING THE FAITH

by Michael G. Ryan

James Wyatt has written some impressive works: *The Speaker in Dreams* (a recent D&D adventure module); *Monster Compendium: Monsters of Faerûn,* with co-author Rob Heinsoo; and a 103-page honors thesis entitled "The Dynamics of Christian Boundaries in Roman Alexandria."

Being a game designer was not his first career choice.

"I self-published my first campaign setting when I was in ninth grade," he admits, most of which was sold to non-gamer classmates and teachers. Furthermore, James also remembers "scrawling a 'Dragon's Bestiary' submission on a piece of notebook paper and sending it off well before that." But the world of dragons and wizards wasn't his first choice for a career. Long before he ended up as a game designer on the D&D Worlds team at Wizards of the Coast, James Wyatt was a pastor in southern Ohio.

From Ministry to Mystery

At thirty-two, James has been gaming for over twenty years, beginning with his first Basic D&D set, the one with the same blue rulebook that inspired so many designers and artists. "I remember pretending to be a wizard in my backyard before I picked up the basic set," he recalls. "I used the monster listings in the D&D books to give us wizards something to fight in our primitive backyard live-action roleplaying game."

Casting imaginary spells as a boy didn't immediately translate to a long-term profession as an adult, of course. James was a religion major while attending Oberlin, and he ultimately earned a Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. From there he served as a pastor for two small United Methodist churches for two-and-a-half years before deciding to change career paths.

"While I was in the ministry, I started submitting adventures to *Dungeon Magazine*," he remembers. "I found that my D&D work was a source of freedom and energy when ministry was more life-draining for me. When I started getting adventures and articles accepted, it was so exciting that it became clear that D&D would never again be just a hobby for me."

Dungeon naturally led to *Dragon Magazine,* and James got his start in the latter in 1996 with material for TSR's Masque of the Red Death setting. ("I loved that setting," he says, "as did at least three other people in the world.") His ongoing D&D experiences continued to free up his energy: "I enjoy campaigns where a lot of the flavor of the world comes through," he says. "My watchwords for a while have been mystery, wonder, and enchantment. I try to work elements of high fantasy into everything I do." With this conviction in mind, he finally decided to move to Wisconsin in hopes of getting a job at TSR.

"I arrived just in time for TSR to close its doors," he says.

Parting the Sea

Persistence paid off, however, and after a period of doing freelance work for other game systems—West End's Hercules and Xena game, for example—he decided to continue to pursue the one game he really knew and enjoyed.

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE NEW EDITION AND THE FORGOTTEN REALMS GO IN THE FUTURE?

"This is motivated primarily by self-interest, but what I'd like to see most is a flowering of campaign options in the new edition. It'll be a long time before we even realize the full potential the game system now has. The Open Gaming License will contribute to that, but Wizards of the Coast should continue to lead the way in producing the most innovative, creative, and finely crafted content available.

"I think Forgotten Realms is headed in the right direction, with the darker, more threatening feel its developing now. The villains of the Realms are no longer a laughingstock—a bunch of cretins whose plans are always foiled. They're a real threat now, and I hope nothing we do in the future diminishes that."

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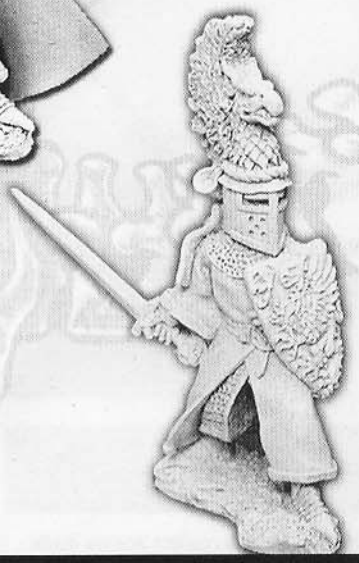

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"D&D has always been my one true love in the gaming world," he says, "despite junior-high flings with other game systems."

Dragon and *Dungeon* continued to "publish just about everything I sent them," he admits, and in January of 2000, the sea between James and D&D was finally parted: he was hired by Wizards of the Coast to work on the game. His first assignment was the Forgotten Realms monster book, *Monster Compendium: Monsters of Faerûn,* of which he wrote two-thirds. Once the creative floodgates were opened, the assignments at Wizards of the Coast poured in. In the last year, James has worked on an exceptional body of publications, including *Defenders of the Faith,* the guidebook for clerics and paladins ("Am I being typecast?" the former pastor wonders), as well as the monster chapter for the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book and numerous articles in both *Dragon* and *Dungeon* (a complete list of his credits appears online at http://aquela.com/roleplaying/articles.html). For now, he considers *The Speaker in Dreams,* a core-adventure on the "Adventure Path" (following *The Sunless Citadel* and *Forge of Fury*) to be his proudest achievement. "I over-wrote that piece like crazy," he admits, "and I still get mercilessly mocked for that. But it's a darned good adventure that I think accomplishes what it set out to do: provide a model for running story-based city adventures."

And of the projects he's worked on, which has been his least favorite?

"I haven't had one yet," he says. "Gosh, I love my job."

Revelations

When it comes to upcoming releases, James is deliberately tight-lipped about the "super-secret" project that he's working on right now, though he promises that it will fantastic. "I've been working on it for about six months," he says. "I'll still be working on it for the next two months . . . and now I won't say another word about it."

In addition to the super-secret one, he also has a handful of other projects in the pipeline: more "Class Combo" articles for *Dragon;* a mini-campaign piece; and what he describes as a "crunchy cleric" article. He also anticipates a return to the Forgotten Realms in the near future.

"I try to spend evenings and weekends with my wife and son," he admits, "so all this outside writing happens after they've gone to sleep . . ."

Though it wasn't the calling he expected from life, James is very pleased to have made a career out of building worlds. "My gamer friends are pretty psyched for me," he says. "They all oohed and aahed appropriately when I showed off copies of *The Speaker in Dreams* and *Monsters of Faerûn.* But mostly, friends and family alike are glad to see me so happy with what I'm doing. They recognize that it's the perfect job for me, and they share my joy in it."

Amen.

THE GENESIS OF "UNUSUAL SUSPECTS"

Regular *Dragon* readers are no doubt familiar with James's "Unusual Suspects" articles (issues #275, #277, and #279), in which he offers up new class-race combos that range from seemingly reasonable options (dwarven monks) to much wilder ones (halfling paladins). The level of detail in these columns is both surprising and comprehensive—and it's all spur-of-the-moment writing. "With my heady academic days long behind me, there's not a shred of research involved," James admits. "It's just pure brainstorming."

The articles originated in James's own campaigns, where he was free to alter the rules governing race/class combinations. When the new edition came onto the scene, however, those traditional restrictions no longer existed. So, James proposed an article "that would give DMs suggestions for imposing new sets of restrictions, things like 'gnomes can only be necromancers' or 'only dwarves can be psions.'" The articles ultimately are intended to be a starting point for DMs and players to "wrap their brains around combinations that might initially seem counterintuitive or to make traditional combinations more interesting."

IF HUMANS BEGAT MERFOLK . . .

I was a vocal lobbyist for including the genasi as PC races in the Forgotten Realms campaign setting, and I'm still happy that there were enough people on my side to make that happen. In my old home campaign, which is set on a water world, I allow water genasi, selkies, and liminals—half-breeds descended from merfolk and humans—as PC races. I managed to get liminals into "Heroes of the Sea" in *Dragon* #250. I hope we'll do some product in the future that will have room for liminals and selkies in the new edition.

—James Wyatt

by Gary Gygax

Up on a soapbox

what the heck is a roleplaying game?! part 3

Of the sixteen elements I have determined to be vital in the roleplaying game form, last column touched on why I believed the first four were valid considerations. They were building (construction, land acquisition, and so on), business (an occupation aside from adventuring), character development (detailing a game persona's history), and combat. As promised, it is now time to take up more of these components and find out why they are included. The current rating for each element is noted at the conclusion for the explanation of why it is, to some greater or lesser degree, crucial enough to be included in roleplaying games.

Economics

This category refers to the basic dealings by characters in attempts to gain money, as well as the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Leaving aside the minor use of such by the characters, the necessity for including this element in the roleplaying game should be self-evident. In devising the world setting, the reason d'etat for the nations, states, and lesser political entities to exist depends on economic factors. Wars are typically fought over economics, of course. While it is a major consideration for the designer and the DM, there is not much active use of economic factors in the typical fantasy campaign milieu. Thus, the current rating for this is only 4.9. To the designer of worlds, it should be a solid 8, at least.

Exploration

Most adventures are such that exploration forms a central part of the whole theme for the plot. This can be on a small scale, the closed setting such as a dungeon, or the grand sort such as found in terra incognito or even strange new dimensions. As this theme is used in most fiction works, as well as in game adventures, the respondents to date have rated it accordingly, a hefty 7.3, about as high as any element, and clearly recognize it as a major play consideration.

Intrigue

The dictionary definition of intrigue is secret schemes, machinations, and clandestine affairs. How can anyone doubt that such stuff is indeed the meat and drink of roleplaying games? This sort of thing goes on among the characters on their own, while of course virtually every adventure assumes some degree of intrigue in the plot. One might, at the risk of being accused of punning, note that a plot without plotting is no plot at all! Again, the respondents have noted this by rating it at 7.1. I should think it would be even higher, but likely the term was not carefully analyzed by some when they answered.

Politics

Every society has politics. That is because politics are defined broadly as what governs a society and the total complex of relations between people in a society. So whenever one encounters a group of persons, human or otherwise, one enters and interacts with a political body.

Who hasn't engaged in an adventure where a scheming wizard tries to usurp the king? If not, what about the rebel against the established order? The downtrodden against the ruling? All of that is pure politics.

The main difference in understanding it as such is the manner in which the characters interact with the political circumstances. When examining the element as a mere word definition, many think of only elections or the roles of politicians, I fear. While in some roleplaying games that's fine, in the action-oriented sort, especially fantasy roleplaying games, such is not generally looked upon as satisfactory. So to note that the current rating for this category is only 5.9 should not surprise anyone. Of course it would be impossible to devise most game adventures without having political considerations. What participants seem to indicate is that the involvement of their game personae therein is not of paramount interest.

Come back next issue to pick up the next group of roleplaying game elements, why they are included, and how they rate after 200 surveys have been tallied.

How Do You Rate?

Rank each component of the game from 9 (most) to 1 (least). If you believe any element does not belong in a roleplaying game, give it a zero.

___ **Building** *(construction, land acquisition, and so on)*
___ **Business** *(an occupation aside from adventuring)*
___ **Character Development** *(detailing game persona's history)*
___ **Combat**
___ **Economics**
___ **Exploration** *(dungeons and for larger discovery)*
___ **Intrigue**
___ **Politics**
___ **Problem Solving**
___ **Questing**
___ **Random Chance** *(encounters, resolution of combat, and so forth)*
___ **Role Assumption** *(staying in character in actions/thinking)*
___ **Roleplaying** *(ditto, and speaking thus when playing)*
___ **Story** *(backstory and in play)*
___ **Strategy**
___ **Theatrics** *(occasional histrionics and sound effects)*

Register your vote at:
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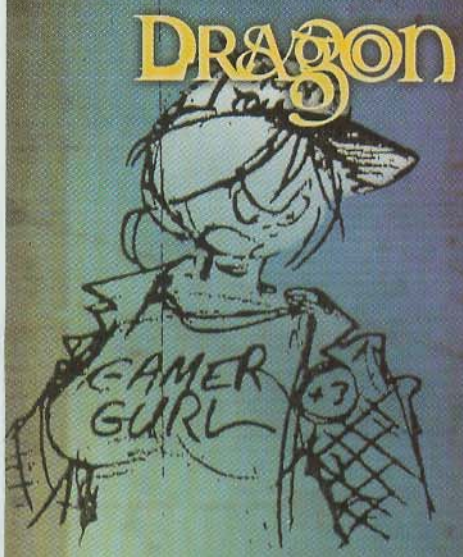

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By Mike Selinker
The inevitable sequel to last year's guide to creating word puzzles teaches you how to delight and confound your players with clever logic tricks.

The Outgoing Goblin's Guide to Gaming Etiquette
By Jeff Vogel
Let the expert on gaming manners instruct you in proper game-table behavior—or not.

Meanwhile, Back in the Slave Pits of Karven . . .
By Robin D. Laws
Cut-away DMing means dividing your attention among players who just can't stick together. Learn how to help your DM make this juggling act work.

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By Johnathan M. Richards
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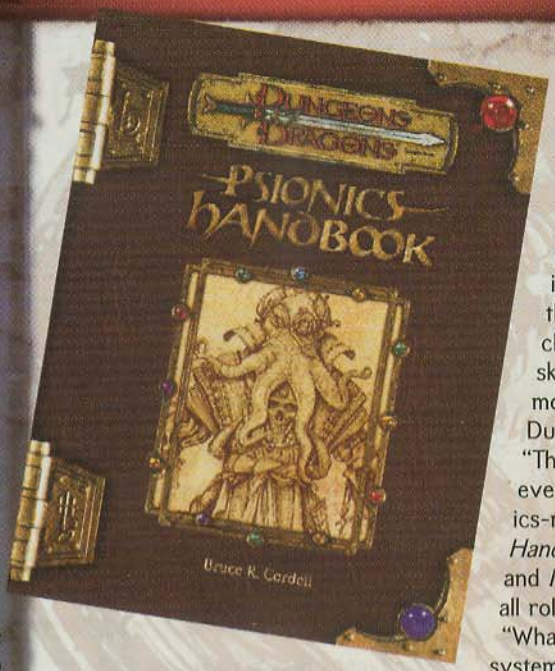

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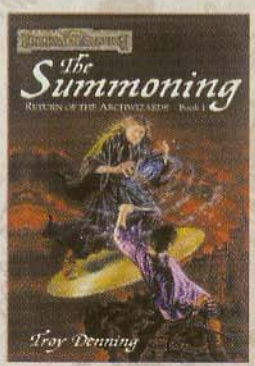
PSIONICS HANDBOOK
A D&D Rulebook
by Bruce R. Cordell

Open your mind to psionics! Look no further than the 160-page *Psionics Handbook*. It includes information about all things psionic: new character classes, prestige classes, feats, skills, monsters, powers, and much more. Ed Stark, Creative Director of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Core, says, "The *Psionics Handbook* contains everything you need to run a psionics-related campaign. It's like a *Player's Handbook*, *DUNGEON MASTER'S* Guide, and *Monster Manual* for psi-characters all rolled into one."

"What's great about the new psionics system is that it isn't 'new' at all—it's the same system that everything else in D&D uses . . . with a twist or two," says Dave Noonan, editor of the *Psionics Handbook*.

Author Bruce Cordell agrees and adds, "This psionics system features elements of previous D&D psionics systems. That said, those features were stripped out, laid out on a game-mechanic work bench, then rebuilt from the ground up. The psionics system for the new edition of the D&D game dovetails seamlessly with the core mechanic of the D&D system. A psionic character will be balanced with a nonpsionic character of equal level. You'll be able to multiclass into and out of the psionic character classes as you can with the core classes. Don't fear for game balance when you use the *Psionics Handbook*. Have at it, and enjoy!"



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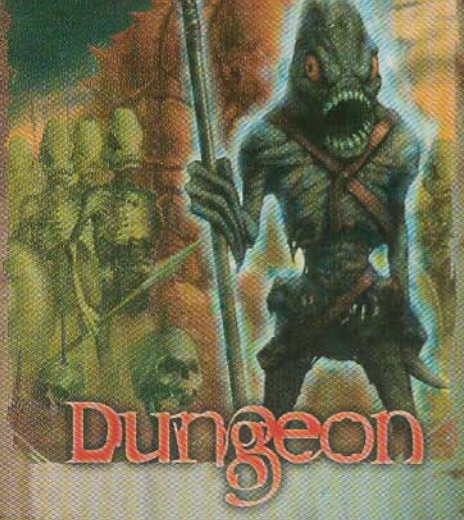

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By James Jacobs
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DIABLO II: TO HELL AND BACK
A D&D Adventure
by Mike Selinker, Rich Redman, and Jason Carl

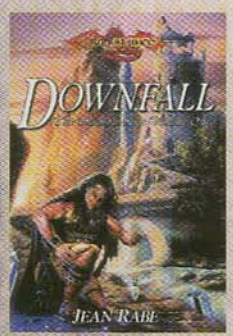
"It's the return of the slam-bang super-adventure! With *Temple of Elemental Evil* hot on its heels, no one should doubt that the deep dungeoncrawl is back with a vengeance," says Mike Selinker, one of the three experienced game designers it took to create the monumental *Diablo II: To Hell and Back* adventure.

"The best thing about this product is how well it recreates the action and and atmosphere of *Diablo II*. All the familiar *Diablo II* elements are there, from the spells to the monsters, and from the magic items to the quests. The action in *Diablo II* creates a truly epic adventure, and that's reflected in this product," says Jason Carl.

The designers had fun making this product and it shows. "Who wouldn't love to design a monster that chews up its slain enemies, digests them almost instantly, and vomits up their remains as its primary attack?" says, Jason Carl.

"*Diablo II* is fundamental D&D: You go someplace. You fight monsters. You get treasure. That's cool," says Rich Redman.

Every level and all four acts of the computer game are represented in this tabletop mega-adventure, including Diablo himself, and Jason Carl warns players that Diablo is "every inch the butt-kicking baddie that he is in the computer game."



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countdown to the forgotten realms

ORGANIZATIONS OF FAERÛN

Delving into long forgotten dungeons and mounting hunts for ravaging dragons might be the typical adventures for your group, but everyone likes a little intrigue now and then. That's where the hundreds of secret societies, cults, and guilds of Faerûn come into play. From noble orders of paladins to scheming cabals of wizards, there's a group for every sort of character. While a book detailing even more of these groups is in the works, the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* gets you started with a selection of the most interesting organizations of Faerûn.

Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Know

Most secret organizations are secret for a good reason: they're up to no good. The ***Cult of the Dragon***, for instance, is devoted to creating and serving dracoliches. If they seem a bit too, well, insane, consider the classically evil ***Red Wizards of Thay***, who want to conquer the world not for some moldy old dragons but for themselves.

Some organizations have set their sights a bit lower. ***The Zhentarim***, also known as the Black Network, want to rule only the land from the Moonsea to the Sword Coast. They aren't a secret society in the usual sense, since they've operated openly for years. Since their operating methods include banditry, arson, and murder, they aren't exactly a proper nation, either.

Bands of cutthroats and robbers are among the most common of secret societies. The ***Fire Knives*** were once a band of assassins from Cormyr. These days they call Westgate their home, living there with the consent of that city's powerful assassin's guild, the Night Masks. Fortunately for everyone else, the Fire Knives reserve their hatred for the Obarskyrs, who rule Cormyr.

A far more peculiar thieves' guild resides deep below Waterdeep, the City of Splendors. There a beholder named ***The Xanathar*** commands eleven undead beholder lieutenants, each in charge of one of the Guild's businesses. Beneath the eye tyrant masters are elite troops (of at least 4th level), as well as powerful wizards, clerics, and fighters who lead their own teams to do the Guild's dirty work.

We Happy Few

Not all secret societies are evil. Outnumbered by their wicked counterparts, some heroes have to remain hidden from the villains they oppose. From the shadows, they help less subtle heroes oppose the wicked and tyrannical, but when the time for action arrives, they must be ready to step into the light.

Enter the ***Harpers***, the most notorious band of meddling heroes in all of Faerûn. Often disorganized and sometimes scorned by their fellow heroes, Those Who Harp take it upon themselves not only to defy organizations like the Cult of the Dragon, the Iron Throne, the Red Wizards, and the Zhentarim but also to pass along the lessons of history to young adventurers who would otherwise make the same mistakes as their forebears.

The ***Lord's Alliance*** is a much more organized bastion of good. It consists mainly of the rulers of Waterdeep, Silverymoon, Neverwinter, and other northern cities. While they still have their differences, they band together when some force threatens them all. Better still, they aren't above hiring adventurers, usually to oppose the Black Network, which they usually agree is the principle threat to their well-being.

What part these organizations will play in your organization is a secret only your DM can reveal. While you quiver in anticipation, join us next month for a look at the most popular element of the Forgotten Realms campaign: magic!

FAERÛN'S ORGANIZATIONS

The *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* provides a chapter on a baker's dozen of Faerûn's most interesting organizations.

NAME	WHO ARE THEY?	WHAT DO THEY WANT?
Cult of the Dragon	Crazy dracolich worshippers	To create and serve dracoliches
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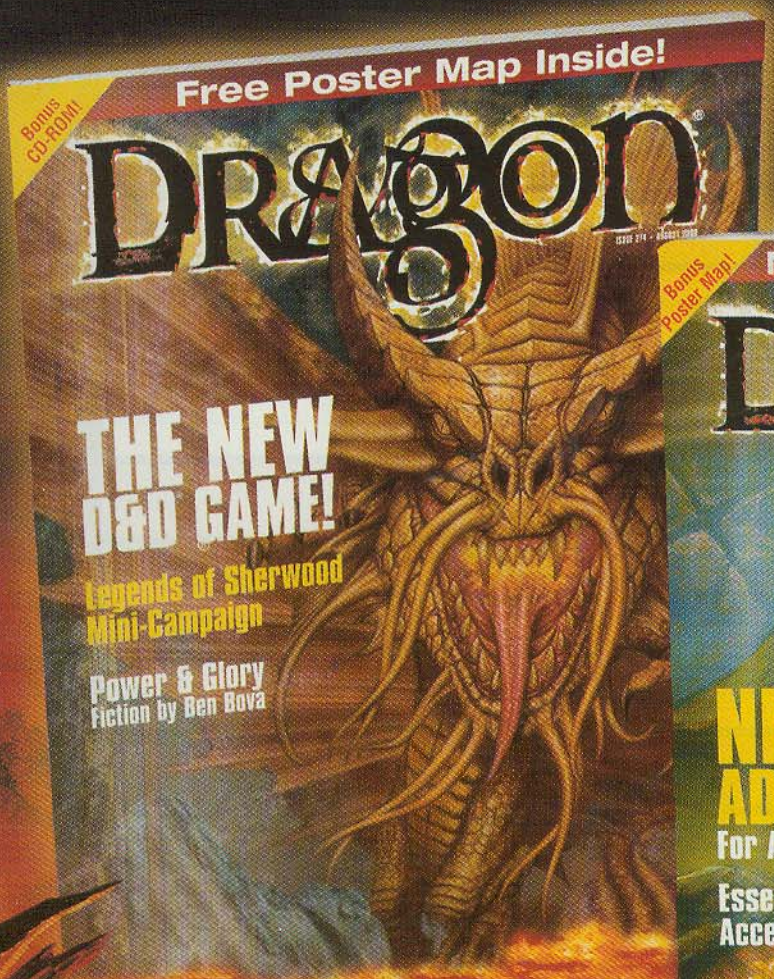

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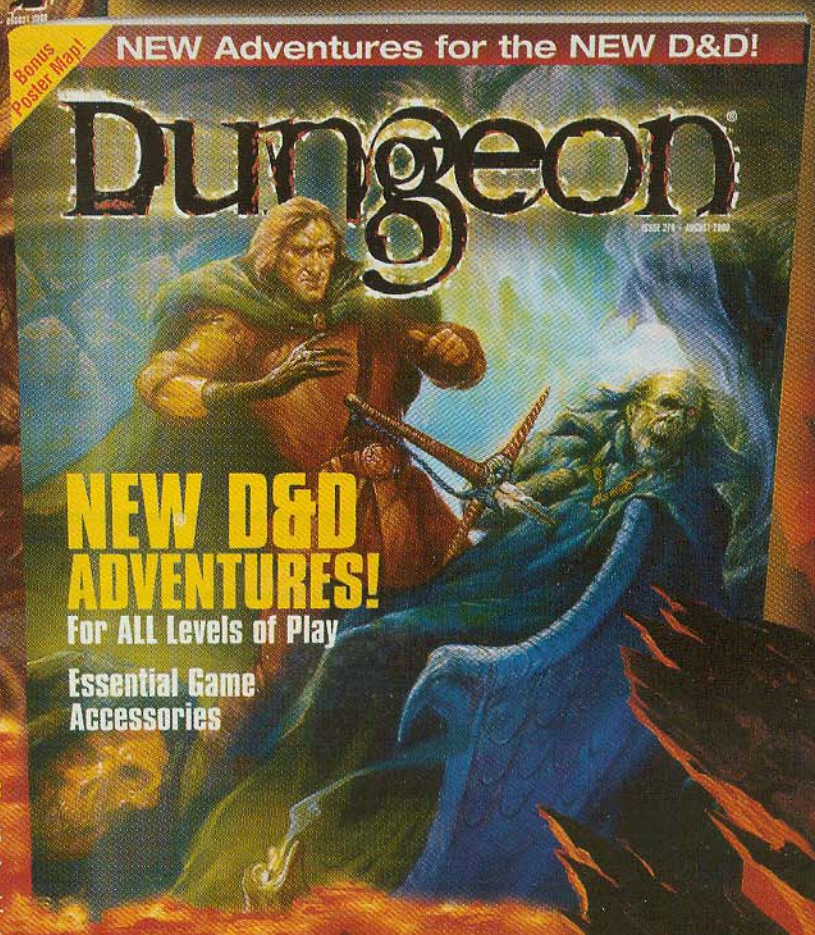

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march
CONVENTION CALENDAR

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DAY		CONVENTIONS
1	Thu	
2	Fri	
3	Sat	
4	Sun	
5	Mon	
6	Tue	
7	Wed	
8	Thu	
9	Fri	**COSCON**
10	Sat	**COSCON**
11	Sun	**COSCON**
12	Mon	
13	Tue	
14	Wed	
15	Thu	
16	Fri	**COASTCON XXIV • GAMES UNIVERSITY • STELLARCON • CON*FUSION**
17	Sat	**COASTCON XXIV • GAMES UNIVERSITY • STELLARCON • CON*FUSION**
18	Sun	**COASTCON XXIV • GAMES UNIVERSITY • STELLARCON • CON*FUSION**
19	Mon	**COASTCON XXIV**
20	Tue	
21	Wed	
22	Thu	**SIMCON XXIII**
23	Fri	**SIMCON XXIII**
24	Sat	**SIMCON XXIII**
25	Sun	**SIMCON XXIII**
26	Mon	
27	Tue	
28	Wed	
29	Thu	
30	Fri	**CONJURATION 6**
31	Sat	**CONJURATION 6 • UBCON**

CONVENTION CALENDAR POLICIES This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed. To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct. The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order: 1. Convention title and dates held. 2. Site and location. 3. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained. Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. **Warning:** We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility. Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *Dragon* Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A. If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 687-8286 (U.S.A.). **Important:** *Dragon Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct. To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

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Mar 16–19	**COASTCON XXIV** Mississippi Mississippi Coast Convention Center, Biloxi Email: coastcon@coastcon.org Web: www.coastcon.org Featuring: RPGs, CCGs, door prizes, miniature painting competition.
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Mar 16–18	**GAMES UNIVERSITY** California Radisson Hotel, Fullerton • Contact: Norm Carlson Email: gamesucon@aol.com Featuring: "Meet the Personalities" Party
Mar 16–18	**STELLARCON 25** North Carolina Greensboro Hilton • Box 4, EUC, UNCG • Greensboro, NC 27412 Email: stellarcon@hotmail.com Web: come.to/stellarcon Featuring: Panel discussion, book readings, costume contest, gaming, charity auctions, book signings.
Mar 22–25	**SIMCON XXIII** New York University of Rochester • Contact: SimCon XXIII, c/o URSGA • CPU Box 277146 • Rochester, NY 14627-7146
Mar 30–31	**CONJURATION** Montreal, Canada William Shatner Building, Montreal Email: mcgillgamers@hotmail.com
Mar 31–Apr. 2	**UBCON** New York University at Buffalo, Buffalo • Contact: SARPA • 316 Student Union, University at Buffalo • Buffalo, NY 14261 Email: kriol@mad.scientist.com Web: wings.buffalo.edu/sa/sarpa Featuring: RPGs, CCGs, and board games.

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Apr 20–22	**EERIE CON** New York Days Inn River-View, Niagara Falls • Contact: W. Paul Ganley Email: wpaulg@aol.com Featuring: RPGs and an auction.
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Nodwick
WHEW! I GUESS THAT PURPLE WORM DID A NUMBER ON ME! HOW LONG WAS I OUT?
A WEEK.
A WEEK? IT TOOK A WEEK TO RESURRECT ME?
NOT EXACTLY. I'M STARTING TO SUSPECT THAT ARTAX AND YEAGAR MIGHT BE INTENTIONALLY EXPOSING YOU TO HARM.
YOU DON'T SAY..
SO I'M TRYING TO PUNISH THEM BY LIMITING THE NUMBER OF TIMES PER MONTH THAT I'LL RAISE YOU.
OH. THAT'LL SHOW THEM.
YO! HENCH-BOY! WE'RE Ddocking YOU A WEEK'S PAY.

DORK TOWER
BY JOHN KOVALIC
GUYS! GUYS! LOOK!
WHAT?
WHAT?
THE SNOW'S MELTING!
THE SUN'S OUT!
IT'S ALMOST (GASP) WARM!
SPRING!
NO MORE LONG WINTER NIGHTS BARRICADED INDOORS!
JOY!
SNIFF SNIFF
FRESH AIR!
BLUE SKIES!
INFINITE POSSIBILITIES !!!
THE DARK DAYS TRAPPED INSIDE ARE OVER!
HUZZAH!
SO. BACK TO THE GAME?
HUZZAH!
INFINITE POSSIBILITIES !!!

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DMDA00

MIND LORDS of TALARON

A New Breed of Psions

by Stephen Kenson • illustrated by Brom

As they made their way deeper and deeper, the ancient ruins slowly gave way to the Underdark. The tunnel walls were limned with mosses and fungi that shed violet and green light, casting strange shadows. The ground was soft, like that of a marsh or bog rather than cold, unyielding stone. It was almost like crawling into the maw of some terrible beast. Lidda did her best to put that thought out of her mind, although she noticed that Jozan's hand strayed often to the holy symbol near his throat, and even Krusk looked uncomfortable. Strangely, only Jozan's manservant Iodan seemed unperturbed.

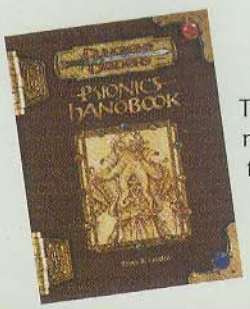
Lidda heard a faint sound and silently signaled her companions. Thus they were prepared when something came around the corner, although they were not prepared for what they saw—a mind flayer! The creature was taken aback only a moment, but long enough for Lidda to try stabbing it through the heart (if it had one). Her blow failed to kill the flayer, and she could hear Jozan calling to Pelor for aid as Krusk stepped forward, swinging his axe. The mind flayer shrieked as the weapon cut it, a sound like nails dragging along slate. The sound intensified as the creature looked balefully at them and Lidda felt like the scream was piercing her skull. Krusk staggered back, groaning and clutching his head.

Still, the mind flayer looked almost . . . shocked, if such an expression translated to its alien features, as if it expected its mental assault to knock them unconscious rather than just stagger them. Something protected them from its attack.

That's when Iodan stepped forward. The gem in his amulet glowed brightly as he pointed at the mind flayer. The creature seemed to recognize him--or the amulet that he wore.

"This ends now, illithid," Iodan said forcefully, eyes narrowing. "You and your kind will not destroy this world as you did ours. That I swear."

Strange forces seemed to crackle in the air between them, and the battle of minds was joined.



This article uses rules from the new *Psionics Handbook*, available this month.

The Psions of Talaron

The Talaire (tal-AIR) are humans from another plane of existence, a world called Talaron. Their homeland was once beautiful, with thick forests, green hills, shimmering fields of grain, and deserts of sparkling sand. Most beautiful of all were the great cities of Talaron, with crystalline spires, tall towers, white pillars, and domes of gold- and rose-colored stone that turned to flame in the light of the setting sun.

The cities were the stronghold of an alliance of six noble families that were gifted with special powers of the mind, powers they called *psi*. With these mental abilities, the psions of these families could hear thoughts, float through the air, command fire, and shape the very stuff of dreams to their bidding. All these powers were theirs to command, and each family possessed a special talent for one of the disciplines of the mind.

Once the six houses had struggled against each other, but then came Talaire, the great peace-maker, who unified the rivals. To keep the peace, Talaire left his own family behind and founded the Diamond Knights: psychic warriors sworn to uphold peace and justice throughout the land. They did so for many generations.

The Talaire were explorers, curious by nature, and their gifts allowed them to plumb the depths of the planes of existence. They traveled far and wide in mind and spirit without ever having to physically leave their strongholds. They also built gates that allowed them to take their bodies to different places.

Their explorations eventually drew the attention of others able to travel the planes, and some such beings came to Talaron. They were the illithids, and they possessed psionic powers similar to the Talaire and ruled a great empire that spanned the planes. They wanted an alliance with the people of Talaron, or so they said.

The six houses greeted these visitors openly at first, but the Talaire quickly realized that the illithids were evil to the core, and they craved brains such as the Talaire's for sustenance. A terrible war began between the Diamond Knights and the mind flayers. Although the conflict was long and difficult, the Talaire were ultimately victorious, driving the illithids from their world and shattering the strongholds of the mind flayers.

But the illithids were not so easily denied. They unleashed a cataclysm on Talaron, causing the sun to dim and flicker like a dying candle. The world became cold, wrapped in a shroud of ice and snow. The people starved and began to die, despite the best efforts to sustain them. In the end, the surviving members of the six houses had no choice but to leave their world behind and seek another where they could survive.

They found a world much like the one they'd left behind, but it was strange to them in many ways. There were humans on this world, too, but also a profusion of races like elves, dwarves, halflings, and orcs, who were bewildering to the Talaire. These races also wielded a power they called "magic," much like the powers of the Talaire and the illithids, but drawn from the study of arcane texts or the worship of gods.

The Talaire feared their psionic powers would brand them as outsiders, so they concealed their abilities, passing them off as magic when they manifested. They settled among the people of the new world and did their best to blend in, keeping alive their true history, never forgetting where they came from. It was important, because they soon discovered that the illithids knew of this world too, and the Talaire refuse to let their new home suffer the fate of Talaron.

The Talaire Today

Modern Talaire are strikingly different from their noble ancestors. It has been centuries since they were forced to leave their dead homeworld and make the jump into the endless planes of existence. The Talaire were able to bring only a few precious family heirlooms with them, so they arrived on their new home with little in the way of material possessions. Their mental powers have allowed the Talaire to make comfortable lives for themselves, but they dare not use them too openly for fear of inspiring hatred and jealousy among the people they live with—and for fear of drawing too much attention from the illithids and other psionic races that might seek to destroy them.

Thus the Talaire live deceptively simple lives, usually as merchants or craftspeople. They pass on their history and culture in secret, although they teach their children how to master their psionic abilities. Sometimes they use their abilities openly, but they usually pass them off as magic of some kind rather than revealing the truth.

The Talaire have intermarried with local people over the years, revealing the truth to their spouses and new family members. Talaire psi ability seems to breed true, and mixed-blood Talaire retain the power of their heritage. Only a rare few are born "mind-blind," lacking any potential for psi. The Talaire have also been known to adopt people with psionic talents into their houses, both as children and adults, helping to strengthen their community. There are a few Talaire half-elves, but no half-orcs that any of the Talaire acknowledge.

While maintaining their quiet lives, the Talaire continue to pass on their history and teachings and remain vigilant against the threat of the illithids and other psionic creatures, which their

PSIONICS ARE DIFFERENT

The Talaire work well with the "Psionics Are Different" option described in the *Psionics Handbook*, particularly if psionic abilities are otherwise unknown in the campaign world. In this case, psi differs enough from magic that the two do not directly affect each other. As a result Talaire abilities seem strange and potentially dangerous to the magic-using people of the campaign world, since their normal magical defenses have no effect on the powers of a psion or psychic warrior. By the same token, the Talaire's formidable psionic defenses offer them little protection against the forces of magic, making them all the more likely to keep their true nature a secret. This option also makes the psionic threats the Talaire struggle against (like the mind flayers) that much more dangerous.

Another choice for the Dungeon Master to consider is the "Psionics Are Different" option only for the Talaire. Perhaps the psionic abilities of characters native to the campaign world are tinged with magic, enough so they interact normally with arcane and divine magic, while the foreign powers of the Talaire are somehow different. This adds a touch of the exotic to Talaire characters, and the advantages and disadvantages largely balance out.

powers make them uniquely suited to combat. They also gather information on psionics and psionic items, which sometimes leads them to lost lore of their own past, and other times points them toward potential psionic threats. All the while, most natives remain completely unaware of the secret protectors living in their midst.

Talaire Characters

Relations: The Talaire tend to be clannish and secretive when it comes to their history and psionic abilities. Although they can be found throughout lands settled by humans, they often keep to themselves without drawing too much attention to their presence. In places where they've lived for long periods, the Talaire are likely to be more open, but they still conceal the fact that they are from another plane out of fear of the reaction it might cause.

Alignment: Culturally, the Talaire tend to be introspective and lean toward a neutral alignment, but there are Talaire of every alignment.

Religion: The Talaire worship an abstract power they call "the Divine Light" through meditation, introspection, and prayer. Unlike other deities, the Divine Light has no clerics and grants no divine spells or special abilities. Thus the Talaire tend to have a casual attitude toward religion. A few Talaire have begun to adopt local religious beliefs, most notably the Vaymin, some of whom have become druids. Religious belief is becoming something of a split between younger and older Talaire, as younger Talaire adopt more of the beliefs (and deities) of their new home with every generation.

Language: The Talaire know how to speak Common, but they also pass on knowledge of Talairian, their native tongue, which they use to communicate secretly among themselves. Talaire who have telepathic powers also use them to communicate covertly.

Names: Talaire names sound vaguely foreign but they are otherwise as diverse as other humans are with regards to naming their children. Talaire typically use their house names only among their own kind, although they have been known to use them publicly as surnames.

Adventurers: Descendants of a noble line with a history of exploration, warfare, and achievement, many Talaire feel the call to adventure and the need to explore the world and find their place in it. Talaire adventure for a variety of reasons, from quests for knowledge and glory to treasure hunting, improving their psionic abilities, wanderlust, and combating dangerous psionic creatures like the illithids.

Racial Traits: The Talaire are humans (albeit humans from another plane of existence), so they have all the normal traits for humans described in the *Player's Handbook*.

Classes: Talaire nearly always have at least one level in the psion class, representing their basic, inborn psionic abilities. Some Talaire never train significantly above this level, focusing their attention on another class (including NPC classes like the expert, noble, or even commoner). Others might focus on psion and another character class or two (commonly fighter or rogue), and many Talaire are exclusively psions. Psychic warrior is also a popular class among the Talaire. The four psionic prestige classes from the *Psionics Handbook* (metamind, pyrokineticist, slayer, and soulknife) are known among the Talaire, although metamind and slayer are the most common. Talaire are also finding the psi-hunter prestige class uniquely suitable to their hatred of illithids, and many are beginning to take up this class as they become more comfortable with arcane magic (see p. 84 of this issue for more information on psi-hunters). Talaire slayers (and psi-hunters) are especially devoted to the destruction of illithids.

Many Talaire are fighters and rangers. Some among the Vaymin are barbarians, but they are relatively rare. Few Talaire are devout enough to become paladins, and those who do are usually young. Clerics are likewise rare, although druids are becoming more common among the Vaymin. Wizards and sorcerers are almost unknown among the Talaire; arcane magic still seems strange to many of them, and most prefer their inborn psionic abilities. Rogues are quite common, since Talaire often live by their wits and learn to dissemble early in life to conceal their true nature. Bards are less common. Talaire often find the mental and physical discipline of the monk class appealing, often combining it in unique ways with their psionic disciplines.

The Six Houses

The most important structure in Talaire society remains the six noble houses that once ruled Talaron. Although they no longer rule a world, the houses still honor their past obligation to protect the ordinary people who lack mental powers. This noblesse oblige extends to the commoners of their adopted homeland as well.

The houses are extended clans, and many members are related by blood, although others are related only by marriage or adoption. The houses continue to intermarry and intermingle, and young psions with a particularly strong aptitude for the discipline of a particular house are often adopted into that house. This, and the adoption of local humans (and elves, on occasion), has kept the Talaire from becoming inbred.

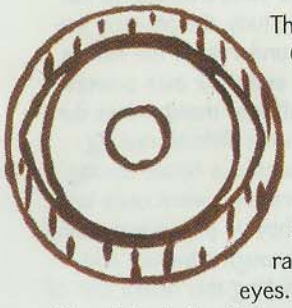
Each house is ruled by an Archon chosen from among the house elders to rule for life. On Talaron, the Archon was much like a king or queen, but now Archons are more like family patriarchs and matriarchs, with power only over the family, and authority that is recognized only by other Talaire.

The six Archons, along with the Precentor of the Diamond Knights, make up the seven-member Archon Council, which meets four times each year (on the solstices and equinoxes) to discuss matters of importance to the Talaire, to determine Talaire law, mete out justice, and so forth. The Council is hosted by a different house for each meeting, and it conducts most of its affairs over long distances through telepathy.

The six houses and their characteristics are described in the following pages. Each house has its own crest, which they display covertly, and each is associated with a particular gemstone that members of the house most commonly use for psicrystals and other psionic items (see the *Psionics Handbook* for details). Each house is strongly associated with a particular psionic discipline—but there are exceptions. There are psions following all disciplines within each house, along with psychic warriors. Sometimes a psion from one house will change allegiance to another house to train with the masters of that house's discipline.

Novar (the Seers)

Nicknames: Blue eyes, stargazers, watchers.
Gem: Sapphire.
Crest: A blue eye on a black, starry background.



The Novar are masters of Clairsentience, the ability to see and sense beyond the range of the normal five senses. They are renowned as seers and prognosticators among the Talaire, and the other houses rely on their advice and insight. The typical Novar is raven-haired, with deep, sapphire blue eyes. They tend to be pale-skinned, although individual Novar vary greatly. Novar often have a somewhat dreamy, distracted look, but they are known for their forceful gaze that seems to look right through a person.

Their abilities have made the Novar successful in various mercantile fields, and they, along with the Kestra, are some of the finest merchants of the Talaire. They don't use their abilities to cheat people, but they see nothing wrong in using their powers to give them insight into good investments. They keep this advantage a secret from others, knowing that other merchants would not look kindly upon their unique business methods. Multiclass Novar tend to be psychic warriors, rogues, fighters, or experts—in addition to being psions. The metamind is the most common psionic prestige class among the Novar.

Donel (the shapers)

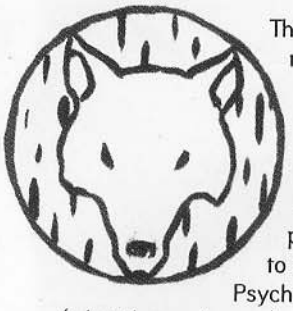
Nicknames: Dreamsmiths, emerald flames, makers.
Gem: Emerald.
Crest: A green flame against a gray or silver background.

The House of Donel practices the discipline of Metacreativity, forming things out of thin air and the stuff of the astral plane with their powers. They were the great builders, crafters, and architects of Talaron. Donel artisans and crafters made many of their world's greatest treasures. They remain well known for their skill and appreciation for beauty, and many Donel remain crafters, although of a more humble sort than they once were. There are many smiths, jewelers, carpenters, sculptors, artists, and engineers within the house. Donel are tall and broad-shouldered, usually with brown or sandy-colored hair and brown, green, or gray eyes. They typically wear something green on their person at all times, often a piece of jewelry set with an emerald (which is also often a psicrystal).

The Donel are known visionaries who value the ability to create things of beauty. Multiclass Donel are often experts, as well as bards, rogues, fighters, and rangers, in addition to being psions or psychic warriors. Some Donel might also study arcane magic and become wizards, although such Talaire are looked upon as "strange" by their fellows for their interests.

Vaymin (the egoists)

Nicknames: Purple veils, somatics, wildlings.
Gem: Amethyst.
Crest: A gray wolf's head on a purple background.



The Vaymin originally hailed from the high, mountainous regions of Talaron, where they developed their psychic abilities to focus on Psychometabolism: (what they call *soma*), the control of body and mind, sharpening the senses, and shifting shape. They're known for their fellowship with the creatures of the natural world, and they are among the greatest rangers of the Talaire. They seem rural and unsophisticated in comparison to their more civilized cousins, but the Vaymin are no fools, and the other houses respect them. They've adapted to their home more rapidly than the rest of the Talaire, and they are often found in remote communities and isolated wilderness areas.

More than any of the other Talaire, the Vaymin have begun to embrace local religious beliefs, particularly those of the druids. Vaymin also commonly have levels in the barbarian, ranger, and rogue classes, along with psion or psychic warrior.

Whilst (the wanderers)

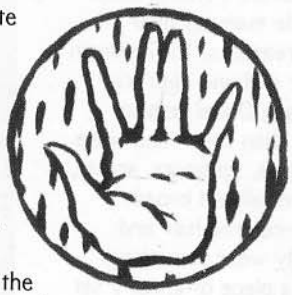
Nicknames: Nomads, rainbow walkers, vagabonds.
Gem: Opal.
Crest: A rainbow road stretching off into the horizon on a blue field.

Many among the House of Whilst feel that the exodus from Talaron, while tragic, opened their people up to their true nature as wanderers and travelers. The Whilst are practitioners of the discipline of Psychoportation, allowing them to travel far and wide. Originally the Whilst remained home only long enough to administer their lands before setting off to explore distant places and other planes. They were the swift messengers and emissaries of the Talaire. Some Whilst, it is said, continue to wander the planes of existence via the psigates (see below). Whilst tend to be swarthy folk with dark hair, eyes, and skin, although their wanderings also tend to make them ethnically diverse through adoption and marriage.

Although the Whilst are trusted as Talaire, some think that their life of wandering has corrupted them somewhat. Certainly the Whilst are often roguish and might have a casual attitude toward the property of others. In truth, many Whilst carry a heavy burden. It was their house's exploration that led to the illithids discovery of Talaron; thus they feel responsible, in part, for the loss of the homeworld. Many Whilst feel their settlement on this world is only a temporary matter, and they quest for a new suitable homeland for their people, either here or on another plane. Rogue is by far the most common multiclass among the Whilst, followed by bard, and less often, fighter. There are also members of the house devoted to the slaying of illithids, and they often take up the slayer or psi-hunter prestige classes. Rumors abound of Whilst who follow the soulknife prestige class, becoming remorseless killers for hire.

Faerst (the savants)

Nicknames: Crimson bolts, fetches, red hands.
Gem: Ruby.
Crest: An open red hand on a white background.



The Faerst (pronounced similarly to "fairest") are masters of the discipline of Psychokinesis, the power of commanding different forms of energy. Faerst savants can move things with their minds, fly through the air, and control light, heat, and electricity. They're among the most physically oriented of the Talaire. On Talaron they were known not only for their skill as warriors but also as scientists and scholars, pursuits they have continued to follow since leaving their homeworld behind. The House of Faerst produces many psychic warriors, some of whom leave to join the Diamond Knights. Many of the most learned Talaire belong to this house, and they study the physical sciences to better understand the nature of the universe and their own powers.

The Faerst suffered many losses during the war with the illithids, making them the least populous house among the Talaire, where they were once one of the largest. They've begun increasing their numbers through adoption and intermarriage, making this house one of the most diverse in terms of appearance.

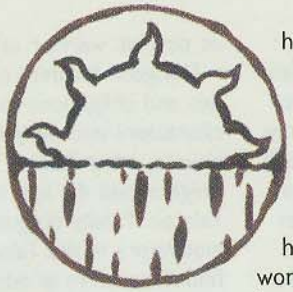
Faerst typically wear some item of red clothing or a piece of jewelry set with a ruby to quietly proclaim their allegiance to other Talaire. Psions and psychic warriors are almost equally common among the Faerst. Common multiclass options include levels in fighter, rogue, or monk. Among the Talaire, the pyrokineticist prestige class from the *Psionics Handbook* is found almost exclusively among the Faerst. The "flame savants" are respected but considered eccentric and sometimes dangerous allies.

Kestra (the telepaths)

Nicknames: Golden minds, light of the mind, thoughtseers.
Gem: Amber.
Crest: A golden rising sun on a dark blue background.

The oldest of the six families of the Talaire is the Kestra, the Golden Minds. The Kestra are practitioners of the art of telepathy or "thoughtseeing." Where the Novar sense beyond sight, the Kestra have the power to see into the minds and souls of others, gaining understanding from their insight. Throughout their history, the Kestra have been the greatest diplomats and judges of the Talaire. Indeed, the legendary Talaire himself was a member of the House of Kestra before he renounced his ties to found the Diamond Knights and achieved the greatest act of diplomacy in the history of Talaron: the unification of the six houses in peace. Today the gifts of the Kestra help to pass on his history and the lore of the Talaire, and keep their scattered people in contact with their heritage and culture.

The Kestra tend to be fair-haired with pale eyes of blue or gray, though darker colors have become more common from adoption into the house. The Kestra have the most elves and half-elves of any of the houses, and these adopted elven members have devoted their long lives to maintaining the history and teachings of the noble Kestra. Because of this, the Kestra are also on the forefront of studying the arcane arts of magic, and they have the most wizards and sorcerers of any house. Common multiclass options for the Kestra include psychic warrior, rogue, and monk. The metamind prestige class is the most common for them, although many also pursue the psi-hunter path.



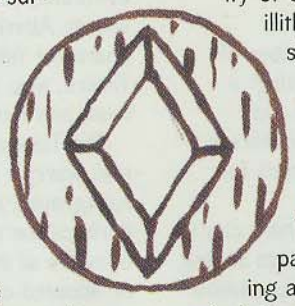
The Diamond Knights

Gem: Diamond.
Crest: A white diamond against a black background.

The Diamond Knights are an institution among the Talaire, not another house. The knighthood was first established to bring peace to Talaron and unite the six houses. They fought valiantly against the illithids during the Mind War on Talaron, and along with the warriors of House Faerst, were nearly destroyed. Those who remained fled with the survivors of the ruling houses and have since worked to re-create their knighthood in secret, maintaining their traditions, protecting their people, and remaining vigilant against threats like the dreaded illithids.

The Diamond Knights are composed mostly of psychic warriors, although they count some psions and multiclassed psion/psychic warriors among their number. Potential knights petition a knight in good standing to become a squire. If accepted, they go through years of training in the history, lore, and skills of the order, including psionic powers. When their patron feels they are ready, squires present themselves before the Archon Council, where they officially renounce their ties to their original house and swear their allegiance to the Diamond Knights and the Talaire as a whole. They are then presented with the diamond pendant of knighthood.

The Diamond Knights are wanderers for the most part, traveling the world, gathering information for the order, and righting wrongs where they find them. They are particularly alert for the misuse of psionic abilities and the activity of evil psionic creatures—the illithids most of all. They consider it their duty to slay such creatures wherever they find them.



Psicrystals and Psionic Items

The Talaire maintain and pass down the lore of making and using psicrystals and psionic items described in the *Psionics Handbook*. Their ancestors were highly skilled at making a wide range of psionic items. Unfortunately, most of these items were lost, left behind on Talaron when the Talaire were forced to flee their homeworld. Only a few precious heirlooms were taken with them, and the Talaire guard these jealously. Their crafters have since made new psionic items, and nearly every Talaire has a personal psicrystal.

Depending on the number of psionic items available in the campaign, the Dungeon Master might want to make the Talaire particularly adept at making psionic items (their ancestors have

PSIGATES

One psionic artifact associated with the Talaire is the psigate: the means the Talaire used to explore so widely and to escape Talaron. The gates are archways, usually constructed of stone and set with crystals, placed in isolated areas (the gates on Talaron were in the strongholds of the six houses). A psigate allows any psionic character with sufficient knowledge to travel to any other psigate on the same world or throughout the planes of existence. The user spends 9 power points and makes a Psicraft check with a DC based on where the character wants to go.

If the check is successful, the gate opens and transports up to one creature per psionic class level before closing again. The character can keep the gate open for additional people by spending another 9 power points per round the gate is open. If the check fails, the gate does not open. The DM might wish to make the Psicraft check in secret, since the character does not always know whether the gate failed to open because of insufficient skill or because there is no gate at the desired destination.

The Talaire placed psigates on other worlds and used them as a means of travel. Apparently other psionic races (including the illithids) also developed and used psigates, although some races use them sparingly to avoid having them turned against them by invaders. Although the Talaire still know how to use psigates to travel, they have lost the knowledge of how to build and maintain them, so many of the gates have fallen into disrepair or been destroyed. The gates on Talaron were sealed when the Talaire left, so it's impossible to use them to return there. The Talaire use the gates sparingly and do their best to keep them secret.

DC	DESTINATION
15	Known gate on the same world
20	Unknown gate on the same world
25	Known gate on another plane
30	Unknown gate on another plane

been doing it for centuries, after all). The Talaire tend to prefer psionic items to magic items, although they can use magic items normally based on their class and abilities.

Using the Talaire

The Talaire can serve a number of functions in a campaign setting: a source of interesting NPCs and adventure hooks, new and different player characters, even a basis for a psionic campaign.

With their history, the Talaire can fit into pretty much any campaign setting. Their secretive nature and formidable psionic abilities make the Talaire interesting and useful NPCs for the party to encounter. Perhaps that young rogue who picks a character's pocket is not only psionic but has a number of psionic family members to come to her aid. A henchman of a player character might have hidden talents that are only revealed in times of need. Perhaps he'll eventually trust his employer with his secret. Alternatively, perhaps a player character falls in love with one of the Talaire, who is torn between telling the truth and family loyalty.

The Talaire can give psion and psychic warrior player characters a unique background and heritage to draw upon. Perhaps the character starts out unaware of being Talaire. A foundling or adopted character might remain ignorant, save for a keepsake gemstone, until encountering one of the Talaire and learning the truth. Such a revelation is a good excuse for adding psion or psychic warrior as a new class.

Dungeon Masters can use family ties and obligations to draw Talaire characters into plots involving their houses, other Talaire, the Diamond Knights, and the lost lore and secrets of Talaron. Family obligations are strong motivators to the Talaire, and they can find themselves at odds between their duty and what they want to do.

Finally, the Talaire can be the basis for a campaign, one in which all of the player characters are Talaire using their psionic abilities to adventure, explore, and fight the forces of evil in their world. This option works particularly well to unite the player characters by their common background and history in a world that is sometimes hostile and alien to them. One good campaign-

TALAIRE ADVENTURE TRACK

One way to incorporate the Talaire into your campaign is to place the following encounters between adventures. Gradually, your players will discover the existence of the Talaire and perhaps even join them in their ongoing struggles.

- On the road the party encounters a woman beset by bandits or evil humanoids. The traveler is Talaire and gives the characters a small token in gratitude for their assistance, telling them they can use it to gain aid from her family in a nearby town or city. She might also display unusual insight into the character's motivations or covertly use her psionic abilities to aid them.
- If the characters visit the Talaire woman's home and display the token she gave them, they gain the aid of her house, although the Talaire don't reveal their true nature unless they have very strong reasons to trust the characters, who might still get some hints about the true nature of their hosts.
- People in the town tell the characters that their hosts are known for keeping to themselves and rumored to have some kind of "special magic." A few narrow-minded people think they might be mixed up with something evil or dangerous.
- A young Talaire from the house (perhaps a relation of the woman they aided) wants to sign on with the party as a hireling to see the world. If the characters have behaved well, the young man has the approval of his elders. He is a psion, but he conceals that fact from the party.
- The characters find a treasure trove containing an ancient map and a psionic item or two. Their hireling takes one of the psionic items, recognizing it as something belonging to his house. He might convince the party to give it to him, or he might steal and hide it. He also realizes the map leads to an old illithid lair and encourages the party to investigate.
- Along their travels, the party's new hireling often shows surprising insight and he secretly uses his psionic abilities to aid the characters when he can. He's helpful and loyal and might apprentice himself to one of the player characters to learn their class (particularly a fighter or rogue, although other classes are suitable).
- It turns out the old lair is not abandoned; it serves as a small outpost for the illithids. The party's hireling uses his psionic abilities to help fight the illithids, at last revealing his true nature and background to the party if they're successful. He asks them to help him return the Talaire items that the illithids have taken to his people, encouraging the party to keep the rest of the mind flayers' goods for themselves.

frame is a group of Diamond Knights from different houses, working together against the illithids and their agents.

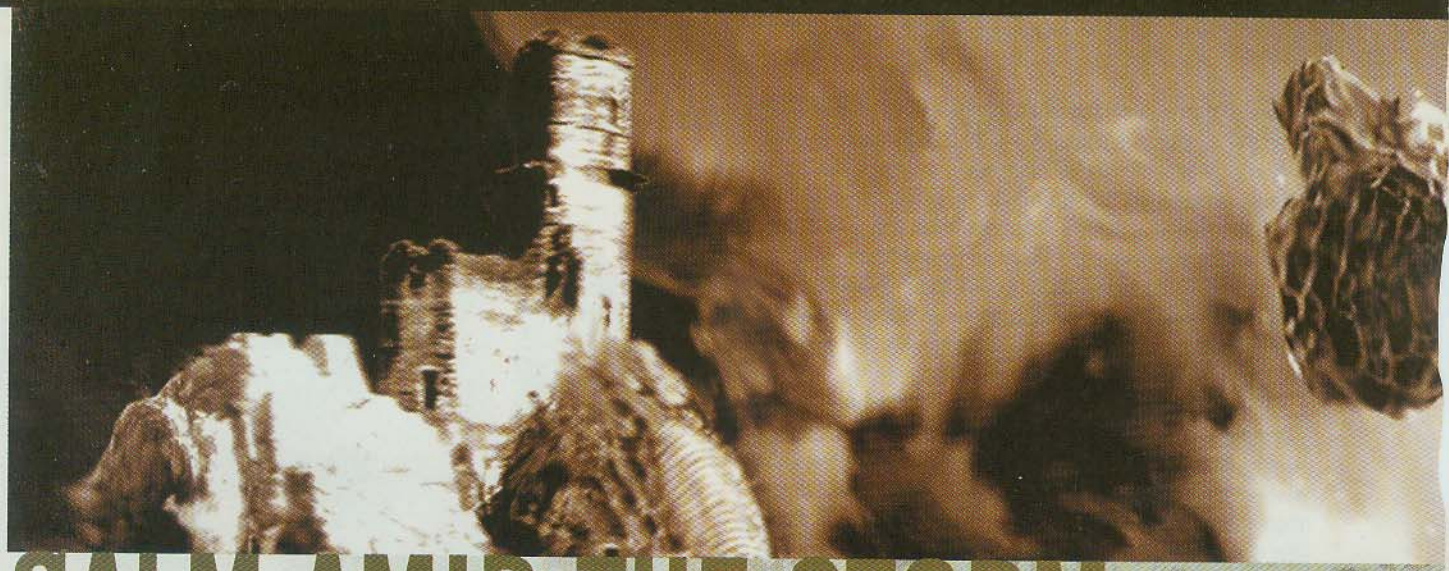
For a different sort of campaign, perhaps the world the Talaire arrived on has no magic or psionics of any kind. Their powers make the Talaire formidable on this world, but the superstitious natives are likely to brand them as evil sorcerers or monsters if the truth about their abilities is revealed. Perhaps the natives have a narrow-minded priesthood with divine magic that they use to keep the world "pure" (that is, free of arcane magic and psionics).

The Talaire are also suitable for a plane-hopping campaign. Perhaps the player characters are Diamond Knight scouts or a family of Whilst searching the many planes of existence for adventure or a new home for their people, encountering other plane-traveling forces like the illithids and their agents—or their foes, like the githyanki—in their travels. The characters might have a plane-traveling psionic item, access to a map of the psigates, or the ability to traverse the planes on their own.

- The Talaire honor the characters for the defeat of the illithids, but information found in the outpost shows other mind flayer strongholds in nearby lands and suggests a growing illithid threat. The Talaire intend to root out their ancient enemies and ask the party for aid, perhaps even adopting them into the house. This discovery can turn into a full campaign against the illithids.

- During the above series of events, one or more of the player characters might "awaken" to latent psionic talents due to interaction with the Talaire and creatures like the illithids. This provides a good excuse for a character to take psion or psychic warrior as a class—and perhaps the hireling's former leader now becomes his student in the psionic arts.

- The hireling character can easily become a player character if someone in the group is interested in playing a Talaire character. In this case, it's up to the player how much to keep from the rest of the party, and the Dungeon Master should ensure that the other characters eventually learn their companion's true nature; otherwise, the player is likely to feel too restricted.



CALM AMID THE STORM

Hidden Teachings of the Githzerai

by Bruce R. Cordell • illustrated by Carlo Arellano

In planes beyond the material world reside creatures wondrous and grotesque, divine and infernal. In a realm where chaos is transcendent live a race of humanoids called the githzerai. Their history is fraught with violence, mighty deeds, and terrible tragedy. Events that would have extinguished a lesser species birthed the githzerai. For it is the githzerai forerunners who put down the plane-spanning illithid empire of prehistoric legend.

This article uses rules from the new *Psionics Handbook*.

Githzerai are a hard-hearted, humanlike people. They are thinner and taller than humans, with sharp features, long faces, and eyes of gray or yellow. Severe and serious, the githzerai tend toward somberness both in dress and personality. As a rule, githzerai are close-mouthed, keep their own counsel, and trust few outside their own kind. They speak their own language, but many also speak Common.

Githzerai dwell in the plane of Limbo. Limbo is a plane of pure chaos. Untended sections appear as a roiling soup of unrestrained elements. Balls of fire, pockets of air, chunks of earth, and waves of water battle for ascendancy until they are in turn overcome by yet another chaotic surge. Within this wasteland of chaos, the githzerai refine their spirits, measuring their worth against the ceaseless changes. Although many githzerai congregate in Limbo-tossed cities, many more are secure in the protection of their hidden monasteries.

Githzerai Monasteries

A githzerai who joins a monastery separates himself from the ordinary ways of githzerai city life to devote himself to the teachings of a respected sensei. Githzerai monks devote themselves to work, study, martial arts training, and meditation.

To become a monk, a githzerai must first choose from among the dozens, perhaps hundreds, of monasteries that drift amidst the chaos storms of Limbo. In fact, most monasteries are secret, hidden enclaves, and even discovering the existence of a given monastery can be an adventure in itself. Many githzerai monks are born in a monastery—far fewer join from outside. Different monasteries boast different styles of operation, up to and including subtly different styles of martial arts training and meditations.

If the truth of the existence of a particular monastery is prized from dusty libraries or far-ranging travelers, a githzerai must locate the chosen monastery and petition to join the monastic order. Non-githzerai can also petition to join a monastery—both applicants are set the same trail. Depending on the monastery in question, the trial can be as simple as living within the monastery for a period of up to one month, all the while abstaining from talk, or something more difficult, like taking up a quest to slay a terrible beast of limbo to show worthiness—possibly a chaos beast or a pack of ravening slaadi.

If the trial is successful, the supplicant is allowed to join the order. After a period of training, the supplicant is initiated into the order in a formal cer-

emony called The Awakening. As part of the initiation, a githzerai monk takes vows of poverty and obedience.

Each monastic order follows its own set of guidelines, called a Rule. Members must live at least the first few months of the membership within their monastery, though afterward they can range far and wide, and need only check back in from time to time.

Though Rules might differ, most orders share many basics ideals. For instance, it is a given that githzerai monks do not fear being caught defenseless, because their bodies are weapons. Githzerai monks are deadly combatants, even weaponless and armorless, and yearn to bring the "good fight" to their enemies, the githyanki and mind flayers. Of course, mind flayers hold a special place in the heart of all githzerai: a place of unadulterated hate.

As a special devotion, githzerai sometimes organize mind flayer hunting parties called *rrakkma*. A rrakkma consists of 4-5 githzerai of 8th level and 1-2 of 11th level, mainly monks, but also at least one spellcaster, one psion, and possibly a rogue. A rrakkma does not return to its home monastery until it has slain a number of illithids at least equal to the number of members of the rrakma.

The average githzerai found in a monastery is a monk, and though they range in level from low to high, 3rd-level githzerai monks seem to be the most common.

Monastery of Zerth'Ad'Lun

Sensei Belthomais is the revered sensei of Zerth'Ad'Lun, a relatively well-known monastery that enjoys great respect among githzerai. The Rule of Zerth'Ad'Lun, called zerthin, is taught in the cloister's halls. Practitioners of zerthin claim to peer a moment into the future, enhancing their martial expertise to unmatched heights.

The monastery is built with the subjective gravity of Limbo in mind (any direction that you decide is down, becomes down). A forest of towers protrudes from the generally spherical monastery. Within, winding stairs connect "floors" with "walls" and with "ceilings" (although all the surfaces are floors for those who don't mind adjusting their own subjective orientation). There are three Great Halls that are used for various aspects of zerthin training. At any given time, at least one of the halls contains a mentor and a class of several githzerai students going through the forms of their martial discipline.

Another important aspect of zerthin is meditation. Thus, hundreds of tiny cells can be found almost everywhere in the halls of the monastery, each lit by dim candles and draped in sound-foiling fabrics. Here, the cenobites take advantage of quiet and solitude, perfecting their mastery of the Rule. Those who truly follow the Rule of zerthin develop abilities that monks from other monasteries are unfamiliar with. These special students are called zerth cenobites.

Zerth Cenobite

Strict meditation into the nature of time and her body's movements through it form the basis of a zerth cenobite's studies of a martial art called zerthin. Zerthin is taught only at Zerth'Ad'Lun. Although disorder rages without, calm order reigns within, allowing a zerth cenobite to learn the art of peering for a moment or two into the future, and thereby gain insight as to where to place her next blow and how to best dodge the next attack of her foe.

Taking this prestige class does not invoke the special monk restriction—if a monk takes one or more levels of zerth cenobite, she can take levels of monk without restriction, following the standard restrictions for multiclassing.

Requirements:

To qualify to become a zerth cenobite, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +4

Knowledge (outer planes): 8 ranks.

Feats: Improved Unarmed Strike, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Mobility

Alignment: Any lawful

Special: Must find the Monastery of Zerth'Ad'Lun amidst the chaos of limbo, successfully petition the sensei for membership, and complete a unique trial determined by the sensei.

Class Skills:

The zerth cenobite's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (outer planes) (Int),

GITHZERAI, MNK3 (STUDENT)

CR 4; Medium-size outsider (humanoid); HD 3d8+3; hp 19; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 19*, touch 15, flat-footed 17; Atk +5 melee (1d6+2, unarmed strike) or +4 melee (1d4+3, +1 dagger) or +4 ranged (1d8, crossbow); SA Monk abilities (Wisdom modifies AC (figured), free feats (included below), Evasion, Flurry of blows, Still Mind), githzerai abilities (psionics, SR 8, Inertial Armor (figured), +4 to Concentration skill (figured), Weapon Focus (figured)); AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +6 (Enchantment +8); Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: Balance +6, Climb +6, Concentration +5, Escape Artist +6, Search +5, Spot +7, Tumble +6. *Feats:* Improved Unarmed Strike, Deflect Arrows, Stunning Fist, *Dodge, Mobility, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Possessions: *+1 dagger.*

Psionics (Sp): At will—*daze, feather fall,* and *shatter.* Upon advancing to 11th character level, a githzerai can use *plane shift* once per day. These abilities are cast as if by a 16th-level caster.

Spell Resistance (Ex): A githzerai has power resistance equal to 5 + 1 per character level.

Inertial Armor (Sp): The githzerai can use psychic force to block an enemy's blows. This gives them a +4 armor bonus as long as they remain conscious.

Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), and Tumble (Dex). See Chapter 4: Skills in the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features:

All of the following are class features of the zerth cenobite prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Cenobites are proficient with club, crossbow (light or heavy), dagger, handaxe, javelin, kama, nunchaku, quarterstaff, shuriken, siangham, and sling. The zerth cenobite gains the same advantages for using a kama, nunchaku, or siangham as does a monk.

Student of Perfection: Zerth cenobites are monks, although they meditate on alternative methods of achieving physical enlightenment. As such, a zerth cenobite gains the unarmed attack bonus, unarmed damage, AC bonus, and unarmored speed as if she were a monk whose level equaled her monk level + her zerth cenobite level. For instance, a 6th-level monk/1st-level zerth cenobite has an unarmed attack bonus of +6/+3 (as if she were a 7th-level monk). Those who manage to meet the requirements for this class who are not monks gain these abilities as if a monk equal to only their zerth cenobite level. This is an extraordinary ability.

Sense Fate: The character sometimes gets premonitions of the immediate future and can attempt to alter the perceived future in a limited fashion. Once per day, the cenobite is allowed to reroll one roll that she has just made. She must take the result of the reroll, even if it's worse than the original roll. If the zerth cenobite has levels of cleric with Luck as a domain power, this power is cumulative with that domain power. This is an extraordinary ability.

Combat Foresight: The zerth cenobite's awareness extends a fraction of a second into the future, allowing her to better land blows against opponents. She gains a +1 insight bonus to her attack rolls. This is an extraordinary ability.

Danger Sense: Presentiments of danger are more acute for the character. She gains a +2 dodge bonus to Reflex saves made to avoid traps and a +2 dodge bonus to AC against attacks made by traps. This is an extraordinary ability.

Improved Foresight: The zerth cenobite's temporal awareness extends a fraction further forward. She has a total +2 insight bonus to her attack rolls and a +1 insight bonus to her damage rolls. This is an extraordinary ability.

Insight: With meditation, secrets of the future become clear to the character. Each day, the zerth cenobite gains a floating insight bonus of +2. That insight bonus can be applied to any ability check, skill check, or saving throw roll. The character can decide to add the insight bonus to the roll before or immediately after it is made. For instance, if the character rolls a Fortitude saving throw with a total of 10, she could decide to "bring her insight to bear," thereby increasing her total to 12. The floating insight bonus can only be used once per day, and like most bonus types, does not stack with other insight bonuses—only the highest bonus applies. This is an extraordinary ability.

***Ki* Strike:** A zerth cenobite's unarmed attack is empowered with *ki.* The unarmed strike damage from such an attack can deal damage to a creature with damage reduction, such as a wight, as if the blow were made with a weapon with a +1 enhancement bonus. *Ki* strike improves as the zerth gains experience, allowing her unarmed strikes at 8th level to deal damage against creatures with damage reduction as if the attacks were made with a weapon with a +2 enhancement bonus, and at 10th level to deal damage against creatures with damage reduction as if the attacks were made with a weapon with a +3 enhancement bonus. This ability does not stack with a standard monk's ability of the same name. This is a supernatural ability.

Time Step: Once per day, the cenobite can step forward in time up to a number of rounds equal to her Wisdom bonus (always into the future, never

THE ZERTH CENOBITE

HIT DIE d8

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+2	+2	+2	Student of perfection, Sense fate
2	+1	+3	+3	+3	Combat foresight
3	+2	+3	+3	+3	Danger sense
4	+3	+4	+4	+4	Improved foresight
5	+3	+4	+4	+4	Insight, ki strike +1
6	+4	+5	+5	+5	Time step
7	+5	+5	+5	+5	Discerning attack
8	+6	+6	+6	+6	Timeless body, ki strike +2
9	+6	+6	+6	+6	Improved insight
10	+7	+7	+7	+7	Timeless, ki strike +3

into the past). In effect, the character seems to disappear, then reappear the appropriate number of rounds later. The monk reappears in exactly the same orientation and condition as before. For the zerth cenobite, no time has passed at all. The zerth cenobite can utilize time step once per day. This is a supernatural ability.

If the space from which the character departed is occupied upon her return to the time stream, she appears in the closest unoccupied space, still in her original orientation. Determine the closest space randomly if necessary.

Discerning Attack: A zerth cenobite can see a foe's past hurts even if completely healed, and she has the ability to attack the creature and re-inflict those past wounds in the present. A discerning attack can be made against a creature damaged by the cenobite's unarmed attacks. The cenobite can use this supernatural ability once per round, but no more than once per zerth cenobite level per day. The cenobite must declare she is using a discerning attack before making the attack roll (thus, a missed attack roll ruins the attempt). A foe struck by the cenobite is forced to make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + the zerth cenobite's level + the zerth cenobite's Wisdom modifier) in addition to receiving normal damage. If the saving throw fails, the opponent takes double damage (as if the attack had delivered a critical). If the cenobite strikes with a critical hit while using a discerning attack, the damage is tripled (as if the attack had a critical rating of ×3). Creatures immune to critical hits cannot be affected by the cenobite's discerning attack. This is a supernatural ability.

Timeless Body: A zerth cenobite no longer suffers ability penalties for aging and cannot be magically aged. (Any penalties she might have already suffered remain in place.) Bonuses still accrue, and the monk still dies of old age when her time is up.

Improved Insight: The cenobite's daily floating insight bonus increases to +4, and it can also be used for attack rolls. This is an extraordinary ability.

Timeless: Once per day, the zerth cenobite's personal sense of time increases so greatly that all other creatures seem frozen; however, they are actually still moving at their normal speeds. The zerth cenobite is free to act for a number rounds of apparent time equal to her Wisdom modifier. Normal and magical fire, cold, gas, and the like can still harm her. While timeless, other creatures are invulnerable to the character's attacks; however, she can create spell or psionic effects and leave them to take effect when her timeless period ends. (These effects' durations do not begin until the timeless period is over.)

The character cannot move or harm items held, carried, or worn by a creature stuck in normal time, but she can affect any item that is not in another creature's possession. She is undetectable while the timeless period lasts. She cannot enter an area protected by an antimagic field, by protection from alignment spells (if they apply to the cenobite), or by magic circle spells. This is a supernatural ability.

The chaotic trials of limbo serve only to make a githzerai monk's focus that much more keen.

Monastery of Finithamon

The revered Sensei Kelchurion heads up the near mythical monastery of Finithamon. The general githzerai populace have not even heard the name Finithamon, and those who do know of it believe it to have been destroyed many years ago. However, Finithamon secretly persists and is protected by its assumed demise. Finithamon has reason to hide, for its Rule is not popular among spellcasting githzerai, and even less so among wizards, sorcerers, and mage clans of other planes, for the Rule of Finithamon is arcalos. Practitioners

of arcalos train in methods to fight and slay spellcasters.

The monastery of Finithamon is said to be carved of a single block of white marble transported from another plane. On the outside it has the appearance of a weathered castle of palest white, not unlike a giant chess piece. Within, carved corridors and great spaces are lit by floating globes of light that randomly wander the monastery. The entrance hall is a work of art itself, with every wall, pillar, floor, and even the ceiling intricately carved with delicate, geometric designs.

The monks of arcalos recognize that the swirling chaos stuff of Limbo possesses something akin to the treacherous, random-seeming powers of a spellcaster, and thus they meditate on overcoming the chaos, and thereby, a spellcaster's powers of magic.

Those who excel in arcalos develop abilities unique to the monks of Finithamon. These special students are called arcanopath monks.

Arcanopath Monk

A terrible hate burns in the heart of the arcanopath monk. While some may hate with all their hearts, impotently, the arcanopath encompasses their fury, and learns to use it. The arcanopath's meditations utilize the Rule of arcalos, and its methods of confronting a spellcaster. Once a monk begins to learn the art of the arcanopath, he can never expect safety in the presence of spellcasters again. But the reverse is also true.

Taking this prestige class does not invoke the special monk restriction—if a monk takes one or more levels of arcanopath monk, he can continue to take levels of monk without restriction, following the standard rules for multi-classing characters.

Requirements:

To qualify to become an arcanopath, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +4

Knowledge (arcana): 8 ranks.

Feats: Improved Unarmed Strike, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Mobility

Alignment: Any lawful

Special: Must find the Monastery of Finithamon amidst the chaos of limbo, successfully petition the sensei for membership, and have slain an arcane spellcaster.

Class Skills:

The arcanopath's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), and Tumble (Dex). See Chapter 4: Skills for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features:

All of the following are class features of the arcanopath prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Arcanopaths are proficient with club, crossbow (light or heavy), dagger, handaxe, javelin, kama, nunchaku, quarterstaff, shuriken, siangham, and sling. The arcanopath monk gains the same advantages for using a kama, nunchaku, or siangham as does a monk.

Student of Perfection: Arcanopaths are monks, though they meditate on alternative methods of achieving physical enlightenment. As such, an arcanopath monk gains the unarmed attack bonus, unarmed damage, AC bonus, and unarmored speed as if he were a monk whose level equaled his monk level + his arcanopath monk level. For instance, a 6th-level monk/1st-level arcanopath has an unarmed attack bonus of +5/+2 (as if he were a 7th-level monk). Those who manage to meet the requirements for this class who are not monks gain these abilities as if a monk equal to only their arcanopath monk level.

Clap of Deafness: An arcanopath knows a spellcaster's vulnerabilities. The monk can use this supernatural ability once per round, but no more than once per arcanopath level per day. The monk must declare he is using the clap of deafness before making the attack roll (thus, a missed attack roll ruins the attempt). A foe struck by the arcanopath is forced to make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + the arcanopath level + the arcanopath's Wisdom modifier), in addition to receiving normal damage. If the saving throw fails, the opponent is deafened for 1 round. A deafened character has a 20% chance of spell failure when casting spells with verbal component (as well as suffering a -4 penalty to initiative checks and an inability to make Listen skill checks). Unless specified to the contrary, all spell failure penalties stack. Creatures immune to critical hits or sonic attacks cannot be affected by the arcanopath's clap.

Chop of Muteness: The arcanopath can use this supernatural ability once per round, but no more than once per arcanopath level per day. The arcanopath must declare he is using the chop of muteness attack before making the attack roll (thus, a missed attack roll ruins the attempt). A foe struck by the arcanopath is forced to make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + the arcanopath level + the arcanopath's Wisdom modifier), in addition to receiving normal damage. If the saving throw fails, the opponent is rendered mute for 1 round. A mute character is unable to cast spells with a verbal component (and cannot communicate verbally). Creatures immune to critical hits cannot be affected by the chop.

Strike of Confusion: The monk can use this supernatural ability once per round, but no more than once per arcanopath level per day. The monk must declare he is using the strike of confusion before making the attack roll (thus, a missed attack roll ruins the

The Arcanopath Monk

HIT DIE d8

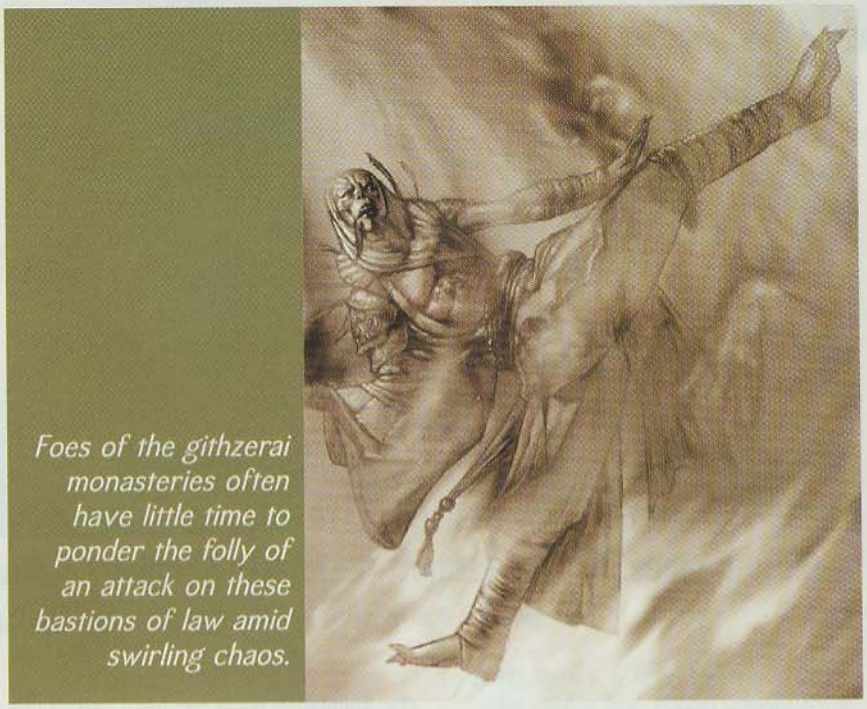
Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+2	+2	+2	Student of perfection, Clap of deafness
2	+1	+3	+3	+3	Chop of muteness
3	+2	+3	+3	+3	Strike of confusion
4	+3	+4	+4	+4	Deflect spell
5	+3	+4	+4	+4	Ki strike
6	+4	+5	+5	+5	Allseeing eye
7	+5	+5	+5	+5	Slap of forgetfulness
8	+6	+6	+6	+6	Empty hand
9	+6	+6	+6	+6	Reflect spell
10	+7	+7	+7	+7	Sundering strike of oblivion

attempt). A foe struck by the arcanopath is forced to make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + the arcanopath level + the arcanopath's Wisdom modifier), in addition to receiving normal damage. If the saving throw fails, the opponent has a 50% chance of spell failure when casting any spell (or attempting to use a spell-like ability) for 2d4 rounds. Unless specified to the contrary, all spell failure penalties stack. Creatures immune to critical hits cannot be affected by the strike.

Deflect Spell: The character can deflect incoming ray and energy missile spells. The arcanopath must have at least one hand free (holding nothing) to use this ability. Once per round when the arcanopath would normally be hit with a ray or energy missile spell (after spell resistance rolls, if any, indicate the spell affects the monk), the character can make a Reflex saving throw against a DC of 20 (if the ray or energy missile has a magical bonus to attack, the DC increases by that amount). If the arcanopath succeeds, he deflects the spell. The arcanopath must be aware of the attack and not flat-footed. Attempting to deflect a ray or energy missile doesn't count as an action. This is a supernatural ability.

***Ki* Strike:** An arcanopath's unarmed attack is empowered with *ki.* The unarmed strike damage from such an attack can deal damage to a creature with damage reduction, such as a wight, as if the blow were made with a weapon with a +1 enhancement bonus. *Ki* strike improves as the arcanopath gains experience, allowing him to make unarmed strikes at 8th level that deals damage against creatures with damage reduction as if the attacks were made with a weapon with a +2 enhancement bonus, and at 10th level to deal damage against creatures with damage reduction as if the attacks were made with a weapon with a +3 enhancement bonus. This ability does not stack with a standard monk's ability of the same name. This is a supernatural ability.

Allseeing Eye: The character can see as if enjoying the effects of a permanent *see invisibility* spell as if cast by a 5th-level sorcerer. This supernatural ability functions continuously.



Foes of the githzerai monasteries often have little time to ponder the folly of an attack on these bastions of law amid swirling chaos.

Slap of Forgetfulness: The arcanopath monk can use this extraordinary ability once per round, but no more than once per arcanopath level per day. The monk must declare he is using the slap of forgetfulness attack before making the attack roll (thus, a missed attack roll ruins the attempt). A foe struck by the arcanopath is forced to make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + the arcanopath level + the arcanopath's Wisdom modifier), in addition to receiving normal damage. If the saving throw fails, the opponent loses 1d4 arcane spells (or 1d4 unused daily arcane spell slots). The lost spells or spell slots are lost first from the highest level spells the spellcaster can cast, but otherwise determined by the creature struck. If the result indicates more spells lost than are prepared (or unused) at a particular level, spells at the next lower level are lost in the same fashion, and so on. Lost spells (or open spell slots) can be regained normally. Creatures immune to critical hits cannot be affected by the slap of forgetfulness.

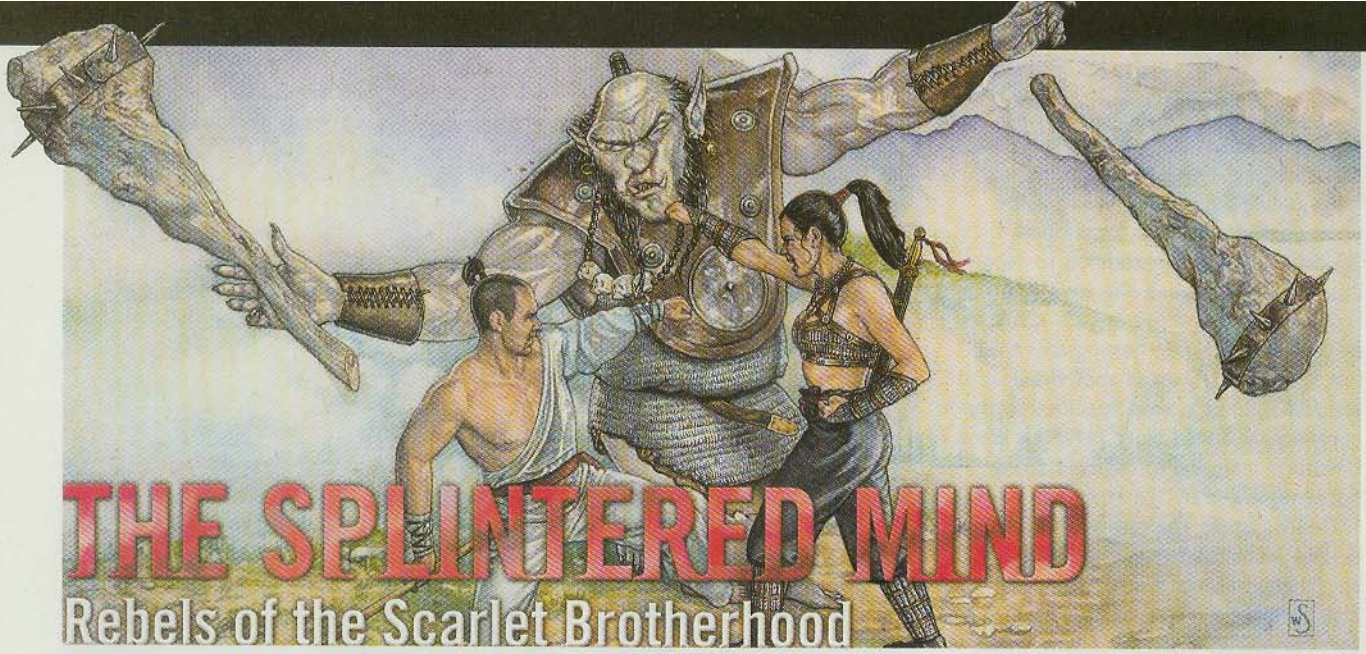
Empty Hand: The monk can make melee attacks against ethereal creatures within range normally. This is an extraordinary ability.

Reflect Spell: When an arcanopath monk successfully deflects a spell, he can choose to reflect it back at the caster. An arcanopath can use this ability a number of times per day equal to his Wisdom modifier. A reflected spell is, in effect, cast back on the original caster, though the monk rerolls any necessary attack roll (though associated DCs are unchanged).

Sundering Strike of Oblivion: When an arcanopath monk makes a successful slap of forgetfulness, he can automatically convert it to a sundering strike of oblivion once per day. In addition to receiving normal damage and losing 1d4 prepared arcane spells (or 1d4 unused daily arcane spell slots), the foe completely loses knowledge of the lost spells. Spellcasters who loose knowledge of the spells may later attempt a Spellcraft check (DC 10 + the spells level + the arcanopath's Wisdom modifier) to regain each one, failure indicates the spell is unavailable until the next time they advance a level; however, at that time they automatically relearn all their forgotten spells, as well as gain knowledge of new spells as normal for the class. The sundering strike of oblivion is an extraordinary ability.

A ray is a spell that produces a ray effect (see Aiming a Spell in Chapter 10 of the *Player's Handbook*).

An energy missile is a weaponlike spell that produces something physical that the spell projects or the caster can hurl, such as *Melf's acid arrow,* or produce flame. *Fireballs, magic missiles,* and the like are not energy missiles.



THE SPLINTERED MIND

Rebels of the Scarlet Brotherhood

by Jesse Decker, Will McDermott & Stephen Schubert • illustrated by Stephen Walsh

"Reveal the truth; conceal the mind." –Splintered Mind mantra

The Splintered Mind is a small group of monks, psions, and rogues who work in secret to derail the plots and plans of the Scarlet Brotherhood. Founded by three former members of the Scarlet Brotherhood in 6096 SD, the group has grown to approximately 100 members in the past ten years.

The Splintered Mind is organized into fifteen cells across the Flanaess. Each cell works independently and has limited contact with (or knowledge of) the members of the other cells. Each cell consists of only six members, who work in pairs in their assigned region to root out and expose Brotherhood plots, while avoiding retaliation from their former fraternity.

The rest of the members of the Splintered Mind reside in a secret monastery near the city of Scant. Here new recruits are trained in the ways of the Mind. Elder members instruct the neophytes on topics ranging from the history of the Scarlet Brotherhood, to martial arts and weapon training, to burglary and espionage.

The work of each cell is also coordinated at the Scant monastery by the original three members–Jeddec Al-Beth, Bri-An Liw, and Shu Besch–who comprise the Splintered Mind Council. Only the Council knows the names and location of all of the members of the Splintered Mind. They monitor the social and political situation as reported by the fifteen cells, then determine how to deal with Brotherhood incursions in those areas.

History of the Splintered Mind

The Splintered Mind has been active for just a little more than a decade. However, the history of this group dates back to 6074, when Jeddec Al-Beth, then a young Brotherhood psion, was sent into the Raker mountain range to incite the humanoid tribes in the mountains to raid human settlements in the Bone March. If successful, the plan would both destabilize the region and give the Brotherhood strong, pliable allies.

Over the course of the next four years, Jeddec worked the Bone March, watching as intermittent raids turned into a full-scale invasion, all the while attempting to predict the long-term plans of the Brotherhood's humanoid allies from the thoughts of their leaders. Unfortunately, it is quite difficult to read the intentions of humanoids from their thoughts (there is very little difference between ally and prey in their minds), and Jeddec began to worry that he might never leave the Bone March alive.

Jeddec reported his fears that the humanoids could easily turn on the Brotherhood, but he had no firm evidence to support his concerns, so the plan continued. By 6078, the Bone March fell to the humanoid invasion, and the humanoid tribes severed all ties with the Brotherhood. Jeddec escaped with all of the Brotherhood members he could warn in time. Only a handful found their way back to the hidden city.

Although praised for saving the few members who survived, Jeddec still blamed himself for the tragic end of this Brotherhood plot. In the years following the debacle, Jeddec threw himself into psionic research, trying to find more reliable ways to uncover hidden truths and some way to discern where he had gone wrong during his time in the Bone March.

Jeddec's mental research led him to two new powers, both relating to the mind's perception of truth. However, his early experimentation with the powers kept him from ever revealing them to the Scarlet Brotherhood. Using the new power, *discover truth,* Jeddec learned that other members of the Brotherhood had known about the humanoids' plans to throw off their allegiance to the Brotherhood once the Bone March had fallen. Certain powerful figures in the Brotherhood decided that the loss was inevitable but that warning the agents working with the humanoids might lessen the damage done to the Bone March.

Feeling betrayed and beginning to understand that the order the Brotherhood wanted to impose on the world would serve only those in power, Jeddec began a dangerous ten-year investigation into the secrets of the Brotherhood–and he began planning his escape. In addition to reinforcing his fears about the corruption within the Brotherhood, Jeddec's research led him to allies. While teaching psionic disciplines to two of his students–a powerful member of the Crimson Blades named Bri-An Liw and an agile initiate

of the Scarlet Fist named Shu Besch–Jeddec found the opportunity to study their minds.

What Jeddec found was that these two students harbored similar doubts about the Brotherhood, and over the course of the next year, Jeddec helped Shu and Bri-An discover the horrible truth behind their doubts. Eventually, Jeddec trusted his students enough to share with them his own discoveries, and the three Brothers banded together to form the Splintered Mind. The three bided their time, learning what they could about the Brotherhood's plans and watching for their chance to escape.

During this time, Bri-An Liw, a fighter of some repute in the Brotherhood who favored the double scimitar, and Shu Besch, a fearsome force with the panther claw, began to develop a new form of tandem fighting. The new style required significant mental power in each member of the pair, but its effectiveness was amazing. Some of their discoveries were copied and developed by other talented monks, but Shu and Bri-An kept most of the knowledge to themselves, knowing that they must soon leave the Brotherhood.

The trio's chance at freedom finally came in 6096 SD, when a small band of mercenaries breached the defenses of the hidden city in a raid to seize a mysterious artifact that had recently been uncovered. During the chaos of the attack, Jeddec, Shu, and Bri-An escaped the hidden city.

Needing to find a secure place outside the reach of the Scarlet Brotherhood, the conspirators made their way to Irongate, a free state within the Iron League. There they founded the first Splintered Mind monastery and began planning a wide-ranging network of members. Unfortunately, the Greyhawk Wars broke out soon after, and Brotherhood forces began marching upon the Iron League. This was the first test of the truth seekers, who were able to warn Cobb Darg about Brotherhood agents within his state before the Brotherhood's armies reached the gate.

After the war, the founders decided that if they were to oppose their former organization, they must dwell within Brotherhood controlled lands, so they set out from Irongate to find a new home, leaving behind their six most promising students who formed the group's first cell. Thus, Jeddec, Bri-An, and Shu made their way to Scant and founded the permanent home of the Splintered Mind outside the city. Needing protection and knowing that the Scarlet Brotherhood controlled all of Onnwal, the trio turned to the city's thieves for help.

Jeddec approached Rakehell Chert, guildmaster thief of Scant, with valuable information that the Mind had uncovered about Brotherhood activities. Chert moved the guild outside the city, narrowly avoiding a Brotherhood attack. There, the guildmaster mounted an effective resistance and used his resources to keep the Splintered Mind hidden from the Scarlet Brotherhood.

Truth Seekers

Truth seekers are the elite agents of the splinter brotherhood. Their primary mission is to find spies and agents of the Scarlet Brotherhood that have placed themselves within local governments. The truth seekers determine the extent of the Brotherhood corruption within the government and report back to the Splintered Mind monastery.

All truth seekers are trained at the secret Splintered Mind monastery. Through rigorous exercises, they not only perfect their fighting skills but also unlock the powers within their minds. This mental energy is focused into Clairsentient and Telepathic powers, and truth seekers have honed these abilities to allow them to establish mental links with their comrades in the heat of battle. They also study in the Monastery's library, learning all they can of the history and politics of their assigned domain.

Truth seekers are formidable in combat, but they are even more powerful when multiple truth seekers fight in tandem. They almost always train and travel in pairs, allowing both to get the full benefit of their *share mind* power. They

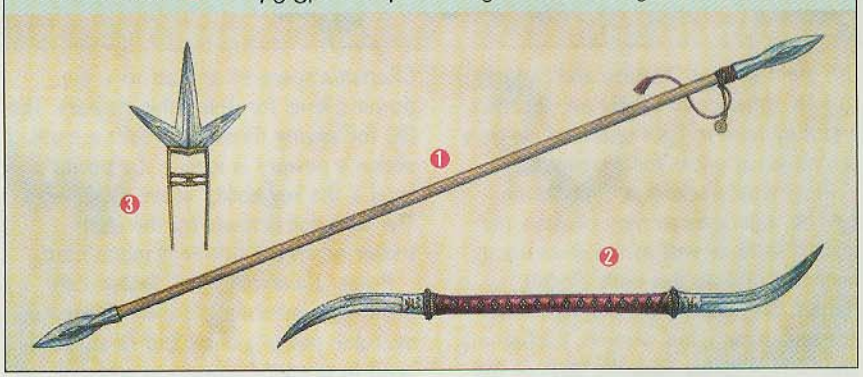
THE EXOTIC WEAPONS OF THE SCARLET BROTHERHOOD

Bladed Staff: The bladed staff is 6-foot-long weapon with blades at either end. The complex fighting styles employed with this weapon typically use the haft of the weapon for defense. The bladed staff is a double weapon. You can fight with it as if fighting with two weapons, but if you do, you incur all the normal attack penalties associated with fighting with two weapons as if you are using a one-handed weapon and a light weapon (see Attacking with Two Weapons on page 124 of the *Player's Handbook*). A creature using a double weapon in one hand can't use it as a double weapon.

Double Scimitar: The curved blades of the double scimitar are used most effectively when spinning and twirling with the weapon. Despite its size, the weapon benefits more from quick, precise movement than from brute force. The double scimitar is a double weapon. You can fight with it as if fighting with two weapons, but if you do, you incur all the normal attack penalties associated with fighting with two weapons as if you are using a one-handed weapon and a light weapon (see Attacking with Two Weapons on page 124 of the *Player's Handbook*). A creature using a double weapon in one hand can't use it as a double weapon.

Panther Claw: The panther claw looks much like a punch dagger with two extra blades. The weapon retains the punch dagger's deadly force and the extra blades are useful for disarming opponents. Wielders proficient with the panther claw gain a +4 competence bonus when making disarm attempts with the panther claw.

WEAPON	COST	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE	WEIGHT	TYPE	SIZE
Staff, Bladed ❶	50 gp	1d8/1d8	×2	20 ft.	10 lb.	S	L
Scimitar, Double ❷	125 gp	1d6/1d6	18-20/×2	–	15 lb.	S	L
Panther Claw ❸	75 gp	1d4	×3	–	3 lb.	S or P	T



TRUTH SEEKER

HIT DIE d8

Lvl	Attack Bonus	Fort.	Ref.	Will	Special	Power Points	Powers Discovered 0	1	2	3	4
1	+0	+2	+0	+2	*Share mind,* monk strike, Two psionic combat modes	2	2	-	-	-	-
2	+1	+3	+0	+3	*Share mind* (insight bonus to AC)	3	3	-	-	-	-
3	+2	+3	+1	+3	Psychoanalyst	4	3	1	-	-	-
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	Share mind (cannot be flanked)	5	3	2	-	-	-
5	+3	+4	+1	+4	Psionic combat mode	8	3	3	1	-	-
6	+4	+5	+2	+5	*Share mind* (+2 insight bonus)	11	3	3	2	-	-
7	+5	+5	+2	+5	Psychic inquisitor	16	3	3	2	1	-
8	+6	+6	+2	+6	*Share mind* (swap initiative)	21	3	3	3	1	-
9	+6	+6	+3	+6	Psionic combat mode	26	3	3	3	2	-
10	+7	+7	+3	+7	*Share mind* (grant share)	33	3	3	3	2	1

REQUIREMENTS

Alignment: Any non-evil
Base Attack: +5
Feats: Improved Unarmed Strike, Combat Reflexes, Dual Strike*
Skills: Diplomacy 8 ranks, Sense Motive 4 ranks

* from *Sword and Fist*

CLASS SKILLS

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Concentration (Con)
Diplomacy (Cha)
Disguise (Cha)
Forgery (Int)
Knowledge (local) (Int)
Knowledge (nobility and royalty) (Int)
Knowledge (psionics) (Int)
Listen (Wis)
Psicraft (Int)
Sense Motive (Wis)

See the *Player's Handbook* and the *Psionics Handbook* for skill descriptions.

use their skills of Disguise and Forgery to gain entrance to nearly any location, and they tend to fight unarmed, so they are never at a loss for a weapon.

Most truth seekers are monks or psychic warriors, as they possess the martial skills as well as the inner focus needed to follow this path. Rogue, fighter, and paladin truth seekers are not uncommon, but wizards, barbarians, and clerics rarely seek the path of the truth seeker, though they are very much a part of the Splintered Mind.

NPC truth seekers always travel in pairs. They do not reveal their identity unless they completely trust the confidant.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Truth seekers are proficient with simple weapons. They are not proficient with armor or shields. The use of armor or shields does not interfere with the truth seeker's abilities but does affect the favorable number of unarmed attacks per round (see below).

Powers: A truth seeker manifests psionic powers. At each level, the truth seeker discovers powers as indicated on the table. These powers must be Clairsentient or Telepathic powers. A truth seeker must have a Wisdom score of at least 10 + the power's level to discover a Clairsentient power, and a Charisma score of at least 10 + the power's level for Telepathic powers. The DC for saving throws to resist a truth seeker's powers is 1d20 + the power's level + the key ability score modifier. The 1d20 roll is made by the truth seeker when the power is manifested.

Power Points: A truth seeker can manifest a number of powers based on available power points, but he does not need to prepare powers in advance, as the power point cost is paid when the power is manifested. Truth seekers do not gain bonus power points for exceptional ability scores. Power points earned as a truth seeker are pooled with power points from any other psionic class, so they can be used to manifest any other discovered power, psionic combat mode, or special ability.

0-level Powers: A truth seeker can manifest any talent (0-level power) he knows for free a number of times per day equal to his truth seeker level + 2, after which the truth seeker must pay the power point cost.

Psionic Combat Modes: At 1st level, a truth seeker learns two of the ten psionic combat modes. At succeeding levels, the truth seeker learns additional psionic combat modes according to the schedule on the table above. Psionic combat modes are covered in Chapter 4 of the *Psionics Handbook.*

Monk Strike: A truth seeker uses unarmed combat much like a monk. A truth seeker has a number of unarmed attacks and deals regular damage as a monk of the character's truth seeker class level. If the truth seeker has monk levels, then these are combined for the purposes of unarmed damage and number of unarmed attacks. Thus a 6th-level monk/6th-level truth seeker would attack as a 12th-level monk.

Share Mind: Truth seekers have the ability to connect to other minds and share thoughts and senses. Once per class level per day, the truth seeker can create a *lesser mindlink* with one willing target. The duration is 1 minute per truth seeker class level, and this power requires no power points to activate. A truth seeker can maintain *share mind* with only one creature at a time. This is a spell-like/psionic ability.

In addition to the *lesser mindlink,* the truth seeker (not the target) gains some advantages, based on his level:

At 1st level, the truth seeker taps into the emotions of the partner mind. As a result, the truth seeker gains any morale bonus or penalty that affects the target mind.

At 2nd level, the additional awareness of the *shared mind* gives the truth seeker a +1 insight bonus to AC. This bonus increases to +2 at 6th level and to +3 at 9th level.

At 4th level, the truth seeker gains even greater perception of his surroundings and cannot be flanked, provided he and the shared target are within line of sight. He can still be flanked by a rogue of four levels higher than his character level.

At 6th level, by understanding how his partner mind is moving, the truth seeker gains a +2 insight bonus to attack rolls against any target that both he and the partner mind threaten.

At 8th level, the truth seeker can communicate to such a degree with the partner mind that he is able to act when the partner would normally act, or cause the partner mind to act more quickly. Once per mindlink, the truth seeker can swap initiatives with the mindlink subject. This is declared at the beginning of a round, before anyone has acted, and the subject must be willing.

At 10th level, the truth seeker can filter information back to the mindlink subject, bestowing any of the above abilities onto the partner mind. This ability lasts for 1 minute and can be used once per day.

The truth seeker gains these benefits whenever a *lesser mindlink* is established, regardless of whether the initiator was the truth seeker. Truth seekers can choose *lesser mindlink* as a discovered power and gain the above benefits.

Psychoanalyst: Truth seekers get the Psychoanalyst feat for free at 3rd level. This gives them a +2 bonus to Diplomacy, Bluff, Intimidate, and Charisma checks. The feat is described in detail in the *Psionics Handbook*.

Psychic Inquisitor: Truth seekers get the Psychic Inquisitor feat for free at 7th level. This allows the truth seeker to detect lies during a conversation. It is described in detail in the *Psionics Handbook*.

Arcane Truth Seekers

Some DMs or players might not wish to include psionics in their campaigns. If this is the case, the truth seekers can be converted to an arcane class rather than a psionic class by replacing the discovered psionic powers and power points with an arcane spell progression identical to the first ten levels of bard. This covers number of castings per day and spells known. These spells should all be chosen from the Divination and Enchantment schools of the wizard spell list. Charisma is the primary attribute for arcane truth seekers.

Class Combos

The abbeys and monasteries of the Scarlet Brotherhood are home to many different traditions. In many of these locales, novitiates train as a monk for many years before being introduced to a different vocation, combining their monk training with that of a wizard, rogue, or psychic warrior. It is rumored that the Brotherhood has a secret proving ground where their monks learn the dark arts of the blackguard, and more than one diplomat has met his end at the hands of monk assassins.

The Scarlet Fist is one such order within the Scarlet Brotherhood. They combine the regimens of a monk with the martial and mental training of a psychic warrior. Unlike most monks, the

TRUTH SEEKER POWERS

0 level	1st level	2nd level	3rd level	4th level
daze	*attraction*	*augury*	**brittle psyche*	*anchored navigation*
detect psionics	*charm person*	*aversion*	*charm monster*	*aura sight*
distract	*combat precognition*	*brain lock*	*crisis of breath*	*detect remote viewing*
inkling	*conceal thoughts*	*clairaudience/ clairvoyance*	*danger sense*	*divination*
know direction	*demoralize*	*combat prescience*	*false sensory input*	*domination*
missive	*destiny dissonance*	*darkvision*	*fate link*	*fatal attraction*
telempathic projection	*disable*	*detect thoughts*	*invisibility purge*	*fate of one*
	**distraction*	**discover truth*	*lesser domination*	*forced mindlink*
	empathy	**fairy tale*	*mindlink*	*mindwipe*
	expanded vision	**find the heart*	*nondetection*	*tailor memory*
	identify	*inflict pain*	*poison sense*	
	know location	*intrusive sense link*	*remote viewing*	
	lesser mindlink	**narrow thoughts*	*schism*	
	object reading	*recall pain*	*ubiquitous vision*	
	sense link	*see invisibility*	*undead sense*	
	steadfast gaze	*sensitivity to psychic impressions*		
		suggestion		

* New powers presented in this article. All other powers are described in the *Psionics Handbook*.

SCARLET FIST

Character Level	Class Level	Attack	Fort.	Ref.	Will	Avg hp	Abilities Gained
1	Mnk1	+0	2	2	2	8	Unarmed strike, evasion
2	Mnk1/PsyWar1	+0	4	2	2	12	Bonus feat, 0-level powers
3	Mnk1/PsyWar2	+1	5	2	2	16	Feat, bonus feat
4	Mnk2/PsyWar2	+2	6	3	3	20	Ability increase, deflect arrows
5	Mnk3/PsyWar2	+3	6	3	3	24	Still mind, increased speed
6	Mnk3/PsyWar3	+4	6	4	4	28	Feat, psionic combat mode, 1st-level powers
7	Mnk4/PsyWar3	+5	7	5	5	32	1d8 unarmed damage
8	Mnk4/PsyWar4	+6/+1	8	5	5	36	Ability increase
9	Mnk5/PsyWar4	+6/+1	8	5	5	40	Feat, monk +1 AC
10	Mnk5/PsyWar5	+6/+1	8	5	5	44	Bonus feat, 2nd-level powers
11	Mnk5/PsyWar6	+7/+2	9	6	6	48	Weapon Specialization
12	Mnk6/PsyWar6	+8/+3	10	7	7	52	Feat, ability increase, Improved trip, increased speed
13	Mnk7/PsyWar6	+9/+4	10	7	7	56	Wholeness of body
14	Mnk7/PsyWar7	+10/+5	10	7	7	60	3rd-level powers
15	Mnk8/PsyWar7	+11/+6/+1	11	8	8	64	Feat, 1d10 unarmed damage
16	Mnk8/PsyWar8	+12/+7/+2	12	8	8	68	Bonus feat
17	Mnk9/PsyWar8	+12/+7/+2	12	8	8	72	Improved evasion, increased speed
18	Mnk9/PsyWar9	+12/+7/+2	12	9	9	76	Feat
19	Mnk9/PsyWar10	+13/+8/+3	13	9	9	80	4th-level powers
20	Mnk10/PsyWar10	+14/+9/+4	14	10	10	84	*Ki* strike, monk +2 AC

training of the psychic warrior is combined with the way of the monk to such a degree that the Scarlet Fist are able to advance in both monk and psychic warrior classes without penalty, provided the two classes are within one level of each other.

Another sect, the Crimson Blades, eschews unarmed combat, preferring instead to master a variety of weapons and styles of fighting. They use the psychic training provided by the Scarlet Brotherhood's psionic fraternities, but they focus less on mental powers and more on pure combat.

The suggested level progression for a Scarlet Fist monk, a Crimson Blade warrior, and a Splintered Mind truth seeker are listed below.

Scarlet Fist

The scarlet fist (monk/psychic warrior) is an unarmed warrior who uses the powers of his mind to enhance the power of his unarmed combat. The monks of the Scarlet Fist are agents of the Scarlet Brotherhood and act on the instructions of that organization.

A scarlet fist advances evenly in monk levels and psychic warrior levels. This gives good unarmed combat abilities, speed, and monk abilities, while providing bonus feats and powers from the psychic warrior levels.

Advantages:

- Feat-enhanced unarmed strike
- Bonus feats
- Access to psionic powers/feats
- Weapon Specialization

Disadvantages:

- No high-level monk abilities
- Slower movement
- Fewer skill points
- No high-level psionic powers

Character Choices

Movement skills are important for a Scarlet Fist monk. Skills such as Balance, Jump, and Tumble are good to keep at a high level. Concentration is also important for manifesting powers in combat situations. A scarlet fist should try to keep those skills at the maximum for the first few levels. Once Tumble is good enough to guarantee avoiding attacks of opportunity (overall +14) and Concentration is high enough to manifest most powers defensively, the scarlet fist might choose to branch out. Spot and Listen are also useful skills to improve to help avoid being caught flat-footed.

As the scarlet fist attacks primarily unarmed, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike) is valuable. Likewise, since the scarlet fist is normally unarmored, feats that enhance AC are appropriate, such as Dodge, Mobility, and Expertise. There are also a number of feats in the *Psionics Handbook* that can enhance AC and unarmed combat.

Crimson Blade

The crimson blade (psychic warrior/fighter) is a fighting machine. They are the shock troops of the Scarlet Brotherhood psions, though they are more direct in their means than most of the Brotherhood. They also serve as bodyguards to the monastery masters.

The primary benefit of a crimson blade is the sheer number of feats they have available. The psychic warrior class gives access to psionic feats, and both classes grant bonus feats at frequent levels. If the character does not have fighter or psychic warrior as a preferred class, then the progression should remain even, but three levels of fighter for every two levels of psychic warrior provides the largest number of feats, while still providing an effective

CRIMSON BLADE

Character Level	Class Level	Attack	Fort.	Ref.	Will	Avg hp	Abilities Gained
1	PsyWar1	+0	+2	+0	+0	8	Feat, bonus feat, 0-level powers, two psionic combat modes
2	PsyWar2	+1	+3	+0	+0	12	Bonus feat
3	PsyWar3	+2	+3	+1	+1	16	Feat, 1st-level powers, psionic combat mode
4	Ftr1/PsyWar3	+3	+5	+1	+1	21	Bonus feat, ability bonus
5	Ftr2/PsyWar3	+4	+6	+1	+1	26	Bonus feat
6	Ftr2/PsyWar4	+5	+7	+1	+1	30	Feat
7	Ftr3/PsyWar4	+6/+1	+7	+2	+2	35	
8	Ftr4/PsyWar4	+7/+2	+8	+2	+2	40	Bonus feat, ability bonus
9	Ftr5/PsyWar4	+8/+3	+8	+2	+2	45	Feat
10	Ftr5/PsyWar5	+8/+3	+8	+2	+2	49	Bonus feat, 2nd-level powers
11	Ftr6/PsyWar5	+9/+4	+9	+3	+3	54	Bonus feat
12	Ftr7/PsyWar5	+10/+5	+9	+3	+3	59	Feat, ability bonus
13	Ftr8/PsyWar5	+11/+6/+1	+10	+3	+3	64	Bonus feat
14	Ftr8/PsyWar6	+12/+7/+2	+11	+4	+4	68	Weapon Specialization feat
15	Ftr9/PsyWar6	+13/+8/+3	+11	+5	+5	73	Feat
16	Ftr10/PsyWar6	+14/+9/+4	+12	+5	+5	78	Bonus feat, ability bonus
17	Ftr10/PsyWar7	+15/+10/+5	+12	+5	+5	82	3rd-level powers, psionic combat mode
18	Ftr11/PsyWar7	+16/+11/+6/+1	+12	+5	+5	87	Feat
19	Ftr11/PsyWar8	+17/+12/+7/+2	+13	+5	+5	91	Bonus feat
20	Ftr12/PsyWar8	+18/+13/+8/+3	+14	+6	+6	96	Bonus feat, ability bonus

assortment of psionic powers.

Advantages:

- Nineteen feats (not including bonus feats for race)
- Psionic powers and feats
- Weapon Specialization

Disadvantages:

- Fewer hit points than single-class fighter
- Fewer psionic powers than single-class psychic warrior
- Fewer power points than single-class psychic warrior
- Slightly lower base attack than single-class fighter

Character Choices

Crimson blades have very few skill points to use. If the character plans to manifest powers in the midst of combat, fully half of the crimson blade's skill points per level should be used to buy ranks in Concentration. The other skill points could be used on Climb, Jump, Swim, or Tumble, depending on individual taste.

Many crimson blades learn a variety of exotic weapons, becoming focused and specialized in them. The only guideline is that the character take a Weapon Focus feat before the sixth level of psychic warrior to take advantage of the free Weapon Specialization feat. A human crimson blade can garner a total of twenty feats by 20th level—the options are almost limitless.

Truth Seeker

The typical truth seeker (prestige class) begins his training as a monk, then applies his abilities to the psychic warrior class before qualifying for, and gaining levels in, the truth seeker prestige class. After three levels of monk (the still mind ability is important for Will saves) followed by three levels of psychic warrior, they begin truth seeker training.

Truth seekers of this sort will intersperse levels of psychic warrior with the prestige class levels as they rise in power. This broadens their knowledge of lower level powers and provides bonus feats on occasion.

Advantages:

- Larger range of low cost powers
- Weapon Specialization
- Bonus feats
- Good fortitude save
- Good unarmed combat

Disadvantages:

- No high level psionic powers
- Slow progression if not human/half-elf due to multiclass XP penalty
- Low power points

Character Choices

The key skills initially for truth seekers are Diplomacy and Sense Motive. As Sense Motive is not a class skill, a would-be truth seeker will need to spend nearly one-third of his skill points on Sense Motive for the first six levels to get to the required 4 ranks for the truth seeker prestige class. Other skill points could be used for Tumble and Concentration. Once the prestige class is attained, truth seekers diversify into Disguise and Forgery, or Diplomacy and Knowledge (any), as appropriate to their role.

As truth seekers are typically unarmored, many choose feats such as Dodge, Mobility, and Expertise to improve their AC, but two feats selected early on should be Combat Reflexes and Dual Strike, which are required for the prestige class. Weapon Focus (unarmed strike) is essential prior to reaching the 6th level of psychic warrior, when Weapon Specialization is granted. If psionic combat is expected,

TRUTH SEEKER

Character Level	Class Level	Attack	Fort.	Ref.	Will	Avg hp	Abilities Gained
1	Mnk1	+0	2	2	2	8	Feat, unarmed strike, evasion
2	Mnk2	+1	3	3	3	12	Deflect arrows
3	Mnk3	+2	3	3	3	16	Feat, still mind
4	Mnk3/PsyWar1	+2	5	3	3	20	Ability increase, bonus feat, 0-level powers, two psionic combat modes
5	Mnk3/PsyWar2	+3	6	3	3	24	Bonus feat
6	Mnk3/PsyWar3	+4	6	4	4	28	Feat, 1st-level powers, psionic combat mode
7	Mnk3/PsyWar3/TrSk 1	+4	8	4	6	32	Share mind, 1d8 unarmed damage
8	Mnk3/PsyWar3/TrSk 2	+5/+1	9	4	6	36	Ability increase, share mind (AC bonus)
9	Mnk3/PsyWar3/TrSk 3	+6/+1	9	5	6	40	Feat, psychoanalyst
10	Mnk3/PsyWar3/TrSk 4	+7/+1	10	5	7	44	Share mind (flanking prevention)
11	Mnk3/PsyWar4/TrSk 4	+8/+2	11	5	7	48	
12	Mnk3/PsyWar4/TrSk 5	+8/+3	11	5	7	52	Ability increase, feat, 1d10 unarmed damage, 2nd-level powers, psionic combat mode
13	Mnk3/PsyWar5/TrSk 5	+8/+4	11	5	7	56	Bonus feat
14	Mnk3/PsyWar5/TrSk 6	+9/+5	12	6	8	60	Share mind (threatening bonus)
15	Mnk3/PsyWar6/TrSk 6	+10/+6/+1	13	7	9	64	Feat, weapon specialization
16	Mnk3/PsyWar6/TrSk 7	+11/+7/+2	13	7	9	68	Ability increase, psychic inquisitor, 3rd-level powers
17	Mnk3/PsyWar7/TrSk 7	+12/+7/+2	13	7	9	72	Psionic combat mode
18	Mnk3/PsyWar7/TrSk 8	+13/+7/+2	14	7	10	76	Feat, share mind (swap initiative)
19	Mnk3/PsyWar7/TrSk 9	+13/+8/+3	14	8	10	80	1d12 unarmed damage, psionic combat mode
20	Mnk3/PsyWar7/TrSk 10	+14/+9/+4	15	8	11	84	Share mind (grant ability), 4th-level powers

then Iron Will gives these characters an extra edge by increasing Will saves.

NEW POWERS

Jeddec developed *fairy tale* years ago when preparing to flee from the Brotherhood. The power's careful use allowed Jeddec to convince the few Brotherhood members who have discovered the Splintered Mind that the group doesn't really exist. Without the protection of *fairy tale,* the renegades would long ago have been discovered.

In his youth, Jeddec developed *discover truth* to aid his own enlightenment. By studying his own experiences, he believed he could learn the lessons life had to teach more quickly. Instead, his use of this power let him piece together some of the guarded secrets surrounding the Scarlet Brotherhood. Knowledge of his superiors' true motives and beliefs led Jeddec to eventually rebel against the Brotherhood's teachings and flee its borders.

Distraction has been in the Scarlet Brotherhood for centuries. The group's psions use the power when working with rogues, allowing the rogues more chances to make sneak attacks without exposing the psion to the dangers of melee combat.

Narrow thoughts is relatively new to the Scarlet Brotherhood. This power is most often used by Brotherhood psychic warriors when dealing with a single, very dangerous foe. This power can give a lightly armored Brotherhood monk better odds against a heavily armored foe.

The power *find the heart* was developed by Brotherhood psychic warriors long ago, and it appeals to the cruel nature of many Scarlet Brotherhood agents. Few outside the Brotherhood choose to master this power.

Years ago, members of the Scarlet Brotherhood realized that their enemies often fought less effectively against them than other foes because of the Brotherhood's fearsome reputation. After years of study, psions in the Brotherhood learned to induce a state of hesitation in their enemies, with the *brittle psyche* power.

Fairy Tale

Telepathy (Mind-affecting)
Level: Psion 3, Truth Seeker 2
Display: Me
Manifestation Time: 1 action
Range: Short (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)
Target: One creature
Duration: Permanent
Saving Throw: Will negates
Power Resistance: Yes
Power Points: 5

Where illusions create images or sounds that do not exist, *fairy tale* causes its target to believe that something that does or did exist is merely imaginary. The caster chooses one object or thing that becomes imaginary in the mind of the target. If a living being is chosen as the "imaginary" object, that creature can then be considered invisible to the target.

Rogue/psion multiclass characters often make use of this power, causing the owner of something they've stolen to think the stolen object is imaginary.

Because the mind is very hard to influence in this way, the use of *fairy tale* is difficult. The target can avoid the power's effects with a successful Will

save. Furthermore, even if the target fails her saving throw, each time she is exposed to the "imaginary" object, she gets another saving throw. The DM has the final word on what circumstances allow the target an additional saving throw. Any time the target of *fairy tale* is attacked by the object or creature she believes to be imaginary, the effect automatically ends. Also, if the target comes in physical contact with the "imaginary" object or creature, the effects of *fairy tale* end.

Discover Truth

Clairsentience
Level: Psion 2, Truth Seeker 2
Display: Au
Manifestation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: One creature
Duration: 5 rounds
Saving Throw: Will negates
Power Resistance: Yes
Power Points: 3

This subtle power uses the target's memories to uncover hidden truths. When activated, the target can visualize a specific 30-second period of time that he remembers. The target sees not what he remembers but rather what was truly there. In the target's memory, invisible creatures and objects can be seen, and illusions have no effect. For *discover truth* to work, the time period recalled must have occurred at least 24 hours before the power's activation.

Distraction

Telepathy (Compulsion, Mind-affecting)
Level: Psion 1
Display: Vi
Manifestation Time: 1 action
Range: Short (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)
Target: One creature
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Power Resistance: Yes
Power Points: 1

This power affects the mind of the target, clouding his anticipation of attacks and disrupting his ability to focus on an attacker. Any creature attacking the target gains a +2 circumstance bonus to hit and characters with the sneak attack ability add their extra damage when attacking the creature if it can be affected by sneak attacks.

Distraction can only affect creatures with an Intelligence score.

Narrow Thoughts

Telepathy (Compulsion, Mind-affecting)
Level: Psion 1
Display: Vi, Au
Manifestation Time: 1 action
Range: Short (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)
Target: One creature
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Power Resistance: Yes
Power Points: 1

Like its lesser counterpart *distraction, narrow thoughts* affects the target's ability to concentrate on combat. However, where *distraction* dulls the perceptions and focus of the target, *narrow thoughts* heightens the target's awareness of a single foe.

A creature affected by *narrow thoughts* must choose one visible enemy to focus on when the power is manifested. For the duration of the power, the affected creature's Dexterity bonus, dodge bonuses, and shield bonus to AC apply only when attacked by the chosen enemy. Furthermore, the affected creature gains an additional +2 dodge bonus to AC against the chosen enemy. This means, of course, that attackers other than the one the affected creature chooses to concentrate on will have a much easier time striking the power's target.

Find the Heart

Clairsentience
Level: Psychic Warrior 2, Truth Seeker 2
Display: Vi, Ma
Manifestation Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Target: One creature
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: None
Power Resistance: No
Power Points: 3

Find the heart gives its user an intuitive feel for striking a creature's anatomy. Using this insight allows the psychic warrior to make more precise, damaging strikes. This power grants the equivalent of +2d6 sneak attack damage. The extra damage is treated like the rogue's ability to sneak attack, except *find the heart* grants bonus damage only to melee attacks. Any time the psychic warrior makes a melee attack, she can add +2d6 points of bonus damage if the target would be denied a Dexterity bonus to AC or if the target is flanked.

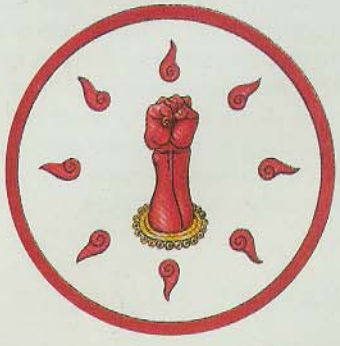
The extra damage from *find the heart* applies only against creatures susceptible to a rogue's sneak attack damage; it does not work against undead, oozes, plants, and incorporeal creatures. Any creature that is immune to critical hits is also immune to the extra damage from *find the heart.* Multiclass psychic warriors who already have the sneak attack ability still gain the benefit of *find the heart;* the extra damage from this power stacks with regular sneak attack damage.

Brittle Psyche

Telepathy (Mind-affecting)
Level: Psychic Warrior 4, Truth Seeker 3
Display: Au
Manifestation Time: 1 action
Range: Short (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)
Target: One creature
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Power Resistance: Yes
Power Points: 7

The affected creature suffers a -2 morale penalty on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and saving throws. Creatures with 10 or more Hit Dice avoid this effect with a successful Will save. Creatures with less than 10 Hit Dice get no saving throw to reduce the initial effect. Creatures who succeed at their first save are immune to the further effects of the power.

Furthermore, when the affected creature takes damage during a combat round, the penalties increase. At the end of any round of combat during which the creature takes damage, the morale penalty increases by an additional -2. The creature can avoid this additional penalty with a successful Will save. Successfully making a saving throw prevents the penalty from increasing but does nothing to prevent the penalty from increasing next round, nor does it rid the creature of penalties already accrued. D



BY ANY OTHER NAME
RACES OF THE UNDERDARK

Difficulty naming characters from non-human cultures is a common problem in most fantasy roleplaying games. Names from historic lists are of little use, obliging DMs and players to create totally new names. But it is difficult to come up with names that are both appropriate for non-human cultures and consistent with one another. This is especially true for a DM who might find himself trying to develop background information for an adventure set primarily in a foreign land.

One of the most popular D&D settings is the Underdark, a dim and gloomy subterranean land full of opportunities for adventure. But the Underdark is also a land filled with many non-human races, each with its own cities, culture and concerns. Inevitably, some Underdark adventurers are going to hear about or interact with members of those unique races. If the names used for members those races do not seem strange and alien, much of the thrill of the Underdark is lost. Ideally, adventurers should be able to identify the race of a creature simply by hearing its name.

Previous articles have already covered names for drow (*Dragon* #267), dwarves (*Dragon* #261), and gnomes (*Dragon* #262). Below are some ideas for the remaining common Underdark societies: derro, duergar, illithid, kuo-toa and svirfneblin.

How it works

Each race has its own method for creating names, briefly explained in the sections below. Tables with name fragments and their definitions are included, allowing names to be assembled by choice or determined randomly. Alternate spellings have also been provided in some cases.

If you don't like a particular combination, try some alternate name fragments listed. Or you might try adding a new letter between the name fragments to create a better sounding name. Although not every combination of name fragments sounds right, usually only a minor change is called for. Also keep in mind that many of these names should sound odd to human ears. No kuo-toan name is ever going to seem normal by the standards of any other race. If you can't make a particular name work, try one with a similar meaning.

If you have randomly generated a name and don't like its definition, try altering the order of the words. It is also possible to use the definition as a starting place for a name's meaning. Often the definitions can be combined in a poetic way for better results. In the case of a name with three or more segments, try dropping one or more of the definitions.

Thus the duergar name Kernbuk could mean "Goblin Slayer," "Assassin of anarchy," "Riot of Slayers," or "Killer of the Weak." Don't worry about two names sharing the same meaning or having two definitions for one name. Two names might sound the same to a human, but a native speaker knows the difference.

by Owen K.C. Stephens

DERRO

Derro societies have no common convention for creating names. It is not unusual for a young derro's name to be derived from dwarven, duergar, svirfneblin, and drow names or even made up of entirely new sounds. A derro name might have no true meaning other than that claimed by the owner.

However, some generalizations can be made about the majority of derro names. They tend to be fairly long, as all derro wish to sound impressive or important. Derro borrow names from other short, subterranean races most often, drow occasionally, and any other races only rarely. Many derro names borrow some name fragment from individuals in their mythology, such as the gods Diirinka and Diinkarazan.

A short list of common derro mythological name fragments is listed in **Table 2**. You can mix these freely with any other names or sounds you wish, or you can roll randomly on **Table 1** to add elements from other races. If the drow, dwarf, or gnome name articles from earlier issues of *Dragon* are available, fragments of those names can be substituted for duergar and svirfneblin.

TABLE 1

1d6	Result
1	Roll once on **Table 2**, once on **Table 3**, and once on **Table 11**
2	Roll twice on **Table 11**, and once on **Table 4**
3	Roll once on **Table 3**, once on **Table 2**, and twice on **Table S11**
4	Roll once on **Table 2**, once on **Table 4**, and once on **Table 11**
5-6	Roll once on **Table 4**, once on **Table 11**, and twice on **Table 2**

DUERGAR

The harsh and grim duergar speak a dialect of dwarven and have names similar to their less severe brethren. Each duergar is named in accordance with strict traditions designed to remind the race of their harsh surroundings, and their loyalty and obedience to their god and clan-leaders. As a result, many duergar clans have no more than a few hundred names, with individuals sharing a name differentiated by their father's name. The honorific "Than" is used to denote "child of," and is usually included in a duergar's name. Thus Udubyr's son Sturgor is know as Sturgor Than Udubyr. There is no difference between male and female names in the strict duergar tradition.

All duergar names consist of one prefix and one suffix. You can choose to roll once on **Table 3** and once on **Table 4**, or you can pick a set of definitions you like. Duergar place names can be created by adding either a prefix or a suffix to the stronghold suffixes listed in the dwarven names article in *Dragon* #261.

TABLE 2

1d12	Prefix	Meaning
1	Adj-	Charmer, leader, ruler
2	Ari-	Dagger, hidden, sword
3	Diin-	Fool, loser, lost
4	Diir-	Lucky, treacherous
5	Faka-	Scout, thief, wisdom
6	Inka-	Savant, wizard
7	Kara-	Cursed, insane
8	Miirn-	Dance, dancer, war, warrior
9	Sec-	Gilded, jeweled, ornamental
10	Uriin-	Poison, tool, weapon
11	Xeer-	Hate, joy, pain
12	Zan-	Brother

MATT WILSON

TABLE 3

1d100	Prefix	Meaning
1-3	Aer-/Agr-	Giant, powerful
4-6	Auk-/An-	Fiery, fire, rage
7-10	Bhir-	Chaos, elf, enemy
11-13	Dak-	Blood, kin, order
14-16	Dek-/Deku-	Home, rock, stone
17-20	Du-/Duer-	Grey, son/daughter
21-23	Dwar-	Hidden, wise
24-26	Fadu-	Mithril, tough, unyielding
27-30	Gat-/Gath-	Color, jewel
31-33	Gurk-	Dutiful, loyal, obedient
34-36	Jarl-	King/Queen, overlord, overseer
37-40	Jer-/Jeru-	Berserk, dangerous, fierce
41-43	Kern-	Anarchy, goblin, riot, weak
44-46	Kras-/Krasu-	Dead, death, foe
47-50	Ladu-	Harsh, stern, stone
51-53	Lond-	Fool, independent, thief
54-56	Onic-/Onu-	Strength, strong
57-60	Rac-/Racu-	Ghost, skull, soul
61-63	Rigu-	Battle, life, war
64-66	Sur-/Sura-	Elder, first, old
67-70	Stur-	Blade, steel, weapon
71-73	Suer-	Efficient, grim, silent
74-76	Tenu-	Gold, metal, silver
77-80	Thar-/Tharu-	Craft, forge
81-83	Then-	Bond, oath, vow
84-86	Thuer-	Ancient, arcane, forgotten
87-90	Udu-	Drow, rats, vermin
91-93	Urt-/Ur-	Rune, runic
94-96	Valu-	Dragon, magic, magical
97-100	Vari-/Vili-	Heavy, short, stout, sturdy

TABLE 4

1d100	Suffix	Meaning
1-3	-alk	Iron, sword
4-6	-alz/-az	Anvil, hammer, mason
7-10	-ark	Noble, ruler
11-13	-ar/-arn	Axe, guard, guardian
14-16	-b/-bar	Captain, speech, voice
17-20	-bael	Judge, priest
21-23	-buk/-bur	Assassin, killer, slayer
24-26	-byr	Army, fist, gauntlet
27-30	-dak/-dek	Rider, spider, steed, swift
31-33	-d/-dur	Mine, miner, mole
34-36	-duz	Exile, outcast, pariah
37-40	-er/-eur	Messenger, speaker
41-43	-far/-ff	Hunter, scout
44-46	-fell	Armor, shield, warrior
47-50	-gar	Dwarf, hero, man
51-53	-gert	Crystal, prophet, seer
54-56	-glen	Eternal, night, void
57-60	-gor	Eye, spear
61-63	-guer	Father/Mother, lord, master/mistress
64-66	-kar/-kuar	Artificer, hand, wizard
67-70	-khil	Chest, fortitude, heart
71-73	-m/-mar	Bearer, giver, keeper
74-76	-moru	Constitution, duergar, endurance
77-80	-nar/-naru	Fantasy, friend
81-83	-oruk	Delver, leader
84-86	-ruar	Wanderer
87-90	-th/-thu	Drink, mead, peace
91-93	-ther	Garrison, home, secure
94-96	-thuar	Crafter, smith
97-100	-vaur	Black, child

ILLITHID

The idea of a written list of illithid names might seem strange, since the mind flayer race has no spoken language. But the illithid do have names of sorts. Each individual has a particular thought pattern and image that identifies him to others of his race. The complexities of these mental names is far too great to detail them all. Suffice to say that mind flayer telepathic names convey a great deal more information than the verbal names of other races.

However, when members of the other races of the Underdark have need to refer to a particular illithid, they usually attempt to translate his identifying thought-image into the trade tongue of Undercommon. Such translations are rough at best, but they do allow non-telepathic races to discuss a particular illithid without resorting to such descriptions as "the one with long tentacles I escaped from last year." This gives non-telepathic races easy labels to use when discussing particular mind flayers.

A name can be randomly generated using **Table 5**, or one can be selected for its meaning.

TABLE 5

1d6	Result
1-2	Roll once on **Table 6** and once on **Table 7**.
3-4	Roll once on **Table 6** and twice on **Table 7**.
5-6	Roll twice on **Table 6** and once on **Table 7**.

TABLE 6

1d12	Prefix	Meaning
1	Abster-	Memory
2	Al-	Dead, death
3	Illi-	Mind
4	Ilsen-	Brain
5	Lugri-	Fear, feared
6	Maanze-	Creed, law
7	Malin-	Arcane, psionic
8	Quas-	Honor
9	Uli-	Noble
10	Ullip-	Thought
11	Urop-	Servant, slave, thrall
12	Xalli-	Disgust, pain

KUO-TOA

All kuo-toan names come from combining simple words from their religious language. To create a name, you must first decide whether you are creating a proper name or a general name. Proper names are used for a single specific creatures, items or places. names are used for entire categories or types of items or creatures.

When creating a proper name, choose or roll for a core word, then add the two halves of additional descriptive words to the beginning and end of the core word. The core words listed in **Table 9** below have hyphens to indicate where they are divided when being added as descriptives for a kuo-toan's name.

Thus, a kuo-toan priest whose name means "powerful judge" starts with the core word for judge, Poolp. The two halves of the word for powerful, Blip, are then added before and after Poolp, resulting in Blipoolpp. If the priest's name had meant "dangerous powerful priest," you would add the two halves of Doolp on as well, creating the name Dblipoolppoolp. A young kuo-toa often has no more than a single core word for a name, but when he becomes older his name is expanded to match his personality and status.

MICHAEL KALUTA

For common general names, the kuo-toan language simply hyphenates words togther but deletes the last letter in each word. Thus the name for the race itself comes from combining all but the last letters of the words for "original," koup, and "masters," toal, into kuo-toa. Similarly, the term for the odd pincer-staves used by some kuo-toa is bli-lao, and illithid are known as koal-neyp.

TABLE 8

1d6	Result
1-2	Roll once on **Table 9**
3-4	Roll once on **Table 9** for a core name, and once for a descriptive.
5-6	Roll once on **Table 9** for a core name, and twice for descriptives.

TABLE 9

1d20	Segment	Meaning
1	Aku-ab	Black, chaotic, swirling, water
2	Bli-p	Pincer, powerful
3	B-ool	Ancient, churning, rough, sea
4	Dii-yl	Crayfish, lobster, monitor, warrior
5	D-oolp	Dangerous, guardian, mother
6	Ka-olb	Enemy, hated, octopus
7	Key-k	Fanatic, loyal, whip
8	Kuo-p	Fingerling (a young kuo-toa), original, true
9	La-od	Fire, pain, painful, red, staff
10	La-ual	Mysterious, mystery, seeker, thief, trap
11	Lee-plo	Relic, magic, magical, storm
12	Maku-ld	Pearl, treasure, valuable
13	Moy-i	King, noble, queen, ruler
14	Ney-pt	Foreigners, slaves, strangers, weak
15	P-oolp	Judge, jury, priest, wise
16	Sy-oop	Eye, knowledge, learned
17	To-al	Masters, strong
18	Ye-ley	Hell, surface, terrible, unknown
19	Yii-lp	Harpoon, leader, swift
20	Yula-yp	Armor, clam, slow, vault

TABLE 7

1d12	Suffix	Meaning
1	-arint	Gourmet of, taster
2	-ator, -tor	Elder, revered
3	-bossk	Lord, master
4	-corian	Leader, liaison
5	-hion	Black, dark, darkness
6	-hoon	Abomination, outsider
7	-mious	Sage, scholar
8	-ordell	Golem, humanoid, mind flayer
9	-sine	Great, powerful
10	-tharid	Devour, devourer
11	-thelid	Conquerer, eater
12	-thid	Flayer, ruler

TODD LOCKWOOD

SVIRFNEBLIN

Svirfneblin names are similar to those of gnomes, but their strongly divided society has resulted in more strongly divided names. In **Table 11**, male name fragments are listed on the left and female on the right. Svirfneblin names mix the fragments in any order pleasing to the ear, but male names never contain female fragments and vice-versa. Names can be rolled randomly on **Table 10**, or up to three name fragments can be chosen based on definition.

TABLE 10

1d10	Result
1-3	Roll once on **Table 11**.
4-7	Roll twice on **Table 11**.
8-10	Roll three times on **Table 11**.

TABLE 11

1d100	Segment	Meaning
1-3	Arg/Argh	Air, immense, sky, vast
4-5	Avf/Ava	Dark, hidden, home, safe
6-8	Basv/Bisf	Aged, elder, master/mistress
9-11	Blin/Blis	Ally, brother/sister, family, kin
12-14	Clad/Clagh	False, illusion, lie, lying
15-16	Chik/Chir	Friend, jewel, treasure, treasured
17-19	Dlim/Dlis	Ally, good, trusted
20-22	Derv/Dera	Dead, dust, harsh, waste
23-25	Ea/Eagh	Black, dark, home, safe
26-27	Eirf/Eirs	Defense, rock, shield
28-29	Ekl/Ekgh	Cousin, kin, small, strong
30-31	Fadk/Fadi	Enemy, evil, silent
32-34	Flear/Flea	Clumsy, dangerous, giant, large
35-36	Fyvn/Fysn	Hidden, sly, small, thief
37-39	Gar/Gagh	Father/Mother, first, honored
40-42	Gtri/Gera	Fire, pain, red, wound
43-44	Hna/Hni	Divine, guardian, priest, secret
45-46	Hyrl/Hyfa	Noble, sturdy, virtue, virtuous
47-48	Jbyr/Jbla	Dagger, knife, sharp, tool
49-51	Jhrl/Jyff	Colleague, counterpart, mate, twin
52-53	Kerl/Kerf	Hero, heroic, mighty, powerful
54-56	Lbik/Lbli	Beautiful, skill, skilled
57-59	Lin/Lyrf	Blue, cold, ice, water
60-61	Mot/Mors	Darkness, shadow, silent
62-64	Nebl/Nebli	Determined, friend, grim
65-66	Nmyr/Nmi	Beast, berserk, beserker, wild
67-68	Perx/Pers	Demon, dragon, nemesis
69-70	Phir/Phifs	Blood, bloody, lava, magma
71-72	Pyn/Pyna	Skill, skilled, useful, valued
73-74	Ran/Ryrr	Holiday, joy, joyful, ritual
75-76	Rzyr/Rzi	Artifact, grand, old, relic
77-78	Slir/Slan	Disease, diseased, tall, twisted
79-81	Surl/Surla	Elder, knowledge, learned, scholar
82-84	Svif/Syffa	Axe, force, forceful, hammer, weapon
85-87	Thal/Thil	Blacksmith, crafty, wise
88-90	Tjyr/Tja	New, weak, young
91-93	Vir/Vifs	Child, childish, jest, joker
94-96	Vuln/Vuli	Airy, high, rival, tricky
97-98	Wahr/Wa	Burrower, cave, deep, mole
99-100	Win/Wyff	Hard, mithril, steely

101 WONDROUS WHEREABOUTS

by E.W. Morton • illustrated by Todd Gamble

You can never cram too many mythical places into your campaign. A setting that awes your audience is the cornerstone of a good fantasy tale. This compilation should inspire the imagination and allow DMs to dream up adventures based upon these or their own wondrous whereabouts. Each of the following locales has been, to some degree or another, inspired by actual mythology, folklore, or fairy tales. Several are based on real places.

1. The **Library of Alexandria** is the project of a powerful cosmic force. This entity has built a labyrinthine hall in which is kept a copy of every tome ever written, though many have succumbed to the ravages of time. It is said that the Library of Alexandria touches every other library ever built through strange, extradimensional pathways.

2. *See boxed.*

3. An ancient king had an earth-shattering secret, one that he took to the grave. Before his death, he dug a small hole into which the secret was spoken. From this hole grew a **whispering plant** that has muttered the king's secret ever since.

4. The **city of Tollan** was once watched over by a heavenly being. Evil gods grew jealous of the city and sought to destroy it. In a great battle, these gods were slain by the city's protector, but their bodies fell to the ground and stuck fast. From these corpses emanated a toxic stench, and the city was abandoned.

5. In the **Garden of the Hesperides**, golden apple trees grow in the shadow of the mighty giant that oversaw their planting. This giant has been turned to stone, though it is thought that he might yet exert influence in the world through some mystical means. Any who would dare steal golden apples from this garden should beware the curse of the petrified giant.

6. Many labyrinths have been built through the ages, but none is as insidious as the extradimensional prison, **Heroes' Demise**. Any who enter the sole door to this magical maze and walk far enough away that they are lost to sight will be unable to find the door again. If any means of escape exists, it remains to be found.

7. *See boxed.*

8. Before the age of mankind, the god Osiris was dismembered by his brother. The dead god's wife searched for the pieces of her husband, and mummified each where she found it. A tomb was built on the site of each such mummification. These many **Tombs of Osiris** stand to this day and still house the remains of the god.

9. Overlooking a particular harbor is the **Witching Stone**. This huge boulder, which sits atop a thin pillar of rock, is said to be a focal point for evil magic. Hags and dark forces gather here often. Stories say that standing atop the stone for nine nights will attract the attention of evil spirits looking to make dark pacts.

10. Near the entrance to the realm of Hel, there is a cavern known only as **Cliff Cave**. Within this place is chained the hound, Garm, guardian of the dead. No matter which path one takes to reach the gates of Hel, one always passes Cliff Cave and must deal with its monstrous inhabitant.

11. Sitting amidst a sea of ice-flows, the **Vale of Eternal Sunlight** is kept warm by the sun, which never sets here. On account of the lighting condi-

Mimir's Well is a well of knowledge; many great secrets can be learned by those who drink of its waters. But beware those who would attempt this, for their passage is sure to be witnessed by a most curious and vicious beholder, the severed head of a dead god made animate to defend the magic well.

2

tions and the isolation of the vale, a truly bizarre ecosystem has developed, one in which many strange materials can be gathered.

12. *See boxed.*

13. The plain of **Vigrid** is to be the site of the Last Battle, where the gods and their foes will share mutual annihilation at the end of time. Some have traveled there and since returned, reporting that they saw flashes of things to come. Most of these visions involve the doom of the traveler and those around him.

14. There is a cave in a mountain that was once the palace of the earth god. This god planted a **marvelous garden** that the species of the world could visit in pairs. One by one, the creatures of the world ate the fruit of the earth god's garden, earning exile from his palace. When all the world's species were banned from the palace, the earth god left for heaven; the fate of his garden is unknown.

15. Upon seeking the forgiveness of the gods, the fabled King Midas found that the curse upon his person could be washed away in a **river** that ran through his kingdom. Anyone who can find this river will be rich, for its bottom is lined with gold dust, the last remnant of the Midas curse.

16. At the **Field of Deeds**, the gods meet regularly in council. For the desperate, this could be an ideal place to spy on or seek audience with the gods. Whether such actions will invite divine wrath remains to be seen, for mortals have yet to find this elusive plain.

17. There is a place where many a ship has gone to die. This **wicked sargasso**, which lets no vessel escape, is home to those sailors whose vessels became caught within the sargasso's strangling hold. They reside within the decaying vessels that carried them here and have formed a curious society all their own.

18. Atop an unnamed hill sits the **Sage Stone**, a monolith vaguely resembling a head. Its face looks eternally asleep, but myths speak of the Sage Stone conversing with passers-by. Stories claim that if the Sage Stone opens its mouth wide and allows travelers to climb down the mineshaft of its throat, these travelers enter a mythical, subterranean realm.

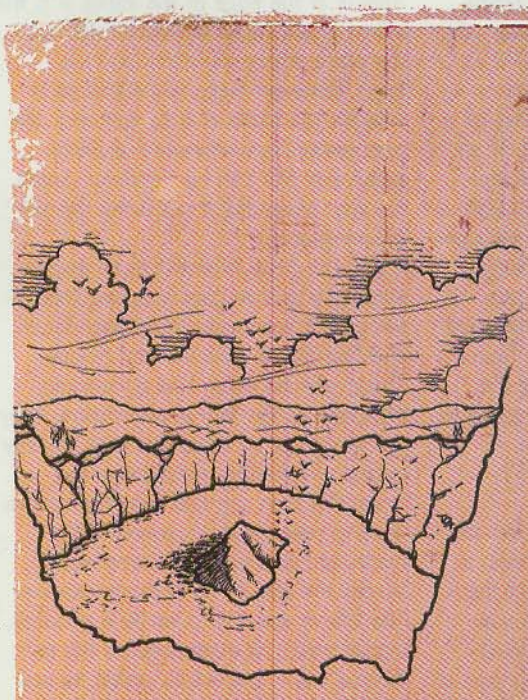
19. The rock known as the **Wheel of Heaven** resembles nothing other than a great millstone. It is the sight of many religious ceremonies—weddings in particular—and it is believed that any infant passed through the hole in the wheel is forever protected from disease.

20. There is a port built partly upon a particular reef. This reef is the body of a **sea monster** that washed up onto the shoals in ancient times and transformed into the rocky material that makes up the reef today. The city would be devastated should a means be found to restore the monster to life.

21. Atop an unnamed mountain in the wilds, there used to sit **Castle Dragonchild**, home to an ancient tyrant and sorcerer. Though the fortress has since crumbled away into nothing, local folklore holds that anyone venturing to this mountain amid the thick morning mists will find Castle Dragonchild and learn that its lord is alive and well.

7

The blacksmith god is said to own a giant blast furnace, almost a building unto itself. Within this magical structure, anything can be smelted away, even immortality. This is the only known way to strip this quality from a god. Many fell powers would pay dearly to have one day's use of this furnace.



In the crater of an extinct volcano there now exists a lake, at the heart of which is Wizard's Island. This small stone isle was once a sorcerer's ship before a rival turned it and its captain into stone. There's no telling just what magical treasures were trapped within Wizard's Island upon its unusual creation.

12

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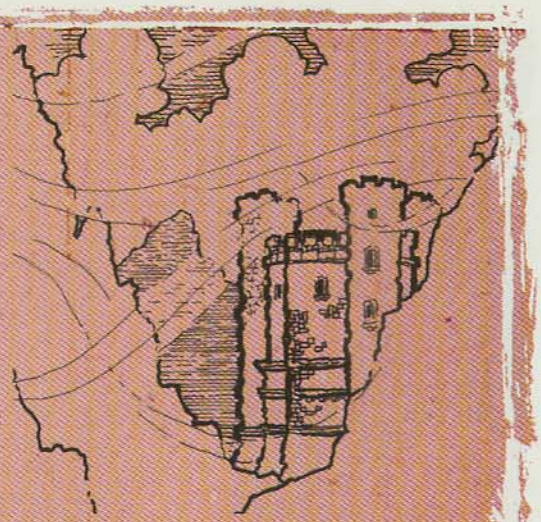


The Palace of Din is one of the most desolate fortresses ever built. Constructed in the icy mountains of the north out of materials that capture the coldest breezes, the castle is so unforgiving that the frost giantess who resides here is separated from her divine husband because he finds her home too inhospitable.

22. The **gates of heaven** are guarded well, and by more than mere angels. Through these massive doors can be seen a barren, empty field, and for the wicked who traverse the gates, this is all they find. Only the righteous who pass through heaven's gates are transported to paradise.

23. There is an isle called **Naxos** where the rowdy wine god Bacchus holds his annual festival. Whoever revels here finds wonders beyond delight, but he might also find doom. Those who linger too long are fated to join the High Carnival of Bacchus forever.

24. **Law's Table**, actually a tablet of titanic proportions, is a remnant of an ancient culture. Scribed in an undecipherable language upon it is the legal code of a long dead civilization. No one knows what these laws are, but sages have deduced some, and everyone within a day's travel who has happened to violate one of them has been found dead within hours of committing the offense. Similar deaths in the area have also been attributed to the Table, although these unfortunates didn't break any of the known laws.

25. Where the River Styx enters the land of the dead stands **White Rock**, a pile of bleached bones that marks the point beyond which no mortal is supposed to venture. Those laying eyes upon White Rock and then sailing past it are guilty of trespass; they might find themselves faced with the wrath of the gods.

26. The **Seeming Emptiness** is the gap between worlds. While this nether void would certainly seem empty of anything worth visiting, a wary traveler can certainly find strange sites within if she knows the secret means of reaching them.

27. If one travels far enough west, one finds the **Place Where Heaven Stands** at the edge of the earth. It is the tallest precipice in the world and marks the place where the earth and sky meet. Between these two surfaces is wedged the blade of a copper axe. No one knows from whence this blade came, nor if it can be removed. Some say that removing it will bring the sky crashing down.

28. The **Grey Monolith** is an ancient structure built to glorify a long forgotten god. It is thought to be abandoned, and few travel here for any reason. Those who do often find mysterious offerings at the foot of the shrine. They are also likely to report hearing ghostly voices whispering terrible secrets.

29. Old men say that **Lake Bosomtwe** used to reside a day's travel to the north, but one night it moved itself across the land to its present location. The lake is watched over by a goddess, whose power is evidenced by the mysterious will-o'-the-wisps within its new swampy locale.

30. The watery realm of **Tlalocan** is the final resting-place of mortals killed by drowning, storms, and waterborne illnesses. It is widely believed that the souls sent here are eternally happy, but some seers would suggest otherwise. Short of an expedition into this netherworld, the truth about it might never be known.

31. There is a **sacred grove** where the faeries hold worship. Mortals daring to enter this mystical circle are doomed to be struck blind and ill by the sylvan powers that watch over the grove, until such a time that atonement in the eyes of these fickle beings is earned.

32. In the underworld realm of Xibalba stand the **Houses of Ordeals.** These hellish structures were built by the creatures of the netherworld to test those who would venture here. There are tales of great heroes who perished or went mad after just one night in these terrible compounds of unknown horrors.

33. When a new king is crowned, he is taken to the **Hall of Thrones**, in which rests each of the seats used by the kings who reigned before him. As part of the coronation, the new king sits on each of his predecessors' thrones and gains some of their knowledge and power.

34. The temple known as the **Sanctuary of Baalbek** houses a magical idol that can speak. It exists only to answer the questions of the faithful, and each pilgrim is awarded with the answer to any single question she poses once in her lifetime. The answer, though cryptic, is always true.

35. *See boxed.*

36. It's said that there exists a **giant berry tree** that is as tall as the world itself. The berries of this immense tree are the suns that shed their light upon the various worlds. By traversing the inner passages of this hollow tree, a voyager can reach any one of a plethora of places across the planes.

37. At all hours, strange, ethereal music fills the **Valley of Pan's Whimsy**. No one knows just what it is that generates this mystical song. All who go to investigate have been driven mad by the powerful and dangerous melody.

38. Stories tell of a land patrolled by a giant called the **Stretcher**. Anyone caught by this fiend is strapped onto a special table. Those shorter than the table are stretched on the rack until

this is no longer true; those longer than the table are instead dismembered until they fit upon it.

39. Somewhere in the fabled home of the deities sits the **Throne of the Gods**, a vantage point from which anything can be seen. Stories say that the throne is sometimes left unattended. It might be possible for a mortal to sit upon it briefly and gain a glimpse of whatever he most desires to see.

40. At the edge of the world, where the sun sets, is the **Abysmal Gorge**, the deepest canyon known. Anyone reaching this gorge can venture into it and access the bowels of the earth—even the palace of the sun god. What wonders exist in either of these locales can only be imagined.

41. The **Temple of the Earth** is not a building; it's a remarkable cave. Upon the walls of this cavern are transcribed a myriad of spiral designs—runes that can be used to tap the unimaginable power residing deep within the earth.

42. The **Druid Stones at Sitleft** were, in the distant past, an army that was turned to stone by an opposing wizard. It is said that a particular spell exists that will restore this army to life in the caster's service. Unfortunately, a bizarre spell has been cast upon the stone army, making its numbers uncountable by any means; the army's exact size is unknown.

43. The **Mausoleum at Halicarnassus** is the tomb of a wealthy king. This vain ruler, upon seeing pyramids built for other kings, decided to build an even grander tomb. His mausoleum includes a full-sized pyramid as a roof supported by countless stone columns, all atop a tiered platform. The whole is decorated with golden statues.

44. Once upon a time, a chaste goddess fell in love with the herdsman Endymion. Her fellows, not wanting her to forget herself, placed the man in an eternal slumber within a particular cave. To this day, the love-struck goddess tends to the sleeping man's herd, which grazes just outside his cavern. Woe to the fool who disturbs the blessed flock of **Endymion's Cave**.

45. The **Isle of the Blest** is a blissful place where heroes favored by the gods retire to live forever in peace. Interestingly, this is also the final resting-place of all titans, even those who at one time opposed the gods.

46. The divine trickster, Loki, has been imprisoned by the gods within a cave. A serpent forever spits venom at the rogue god's face, but Loki's immortal wife is on hand to divert the poison into an ever-expanding **lake of venom** outside the cave. If the growth of this lake is not stopped, its poison might soon affect nearby settlements.

47. Somewhere to the north is an unnamed **realm of monsters** and perils. Here resides a strange race of men who are able to appear and disappear at will. Some have gone searching for the source of this power, but none have returned.

48. Somewhere to the south is a **land forever shrouded** in the darkest clouds. Here, stunted vegetation and subterranean creatures are found on the surface of the earth. Most who go here are quickly turned into food for the monstrous residents, but some find unusual treasures.

49. High above the earth floats the **Pirate-King's pleasure-barge**: a gently flying monstrosity that is easily the size of a city. The tyrannical ruler has granted asylum to anyone pursued by the law; few lawmen dare to follow their charges to this haven of criminals.

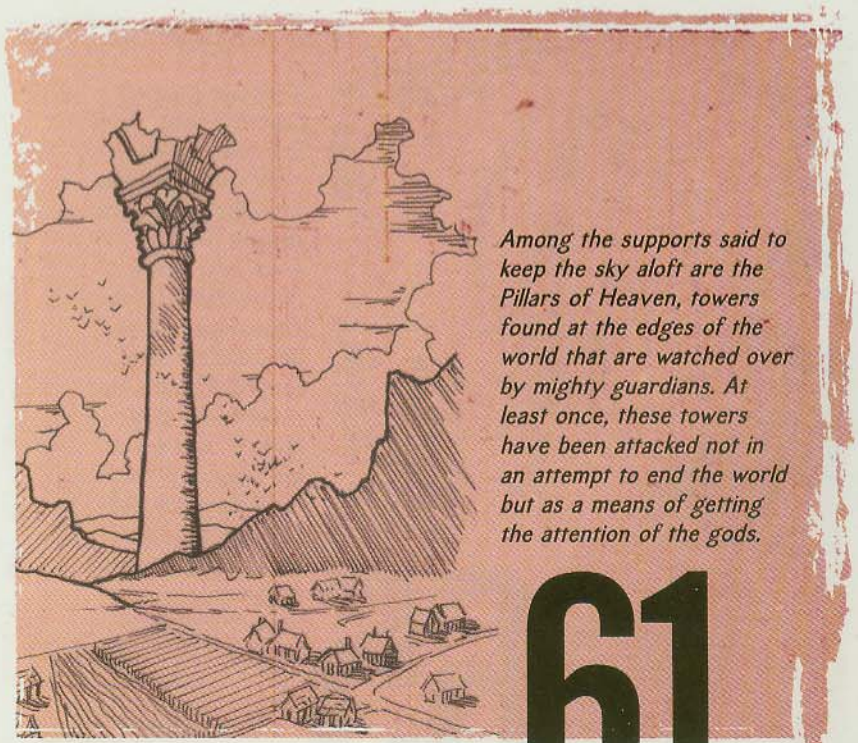
50. At **Franang's Falls**, a rogue god once took refuge from his brethren. Here, this god built an invisible house with a thousand rooms that form an invisible maze. The gods would handsomely reward a mortal who found a way to its heart—the god that resides there would not take kindly to such an intrusion.

51. **Elgabal** is a rock that fell from heaven one stormy night. While astrologers might call it a meteorite, there exists a budding cult that believes otherwise. This cult has constructed a temple at the feet of their god, Elgabal, and vigilantly defend it from the blasphemers who would dare attempt to mine the rock for its heavenly ore.

52. A famous bard was murdered and his body was tossed into the **river Hebrus**. The spirit of the bard now haunts that river, singing sad songs on moonless nights. No one knows what would be necessary to set this poor soul free.

53. **The Colossus**, as tall as the tallest building, currently stands in the middle of a harbor. It was here, many winters ago, that the giant statue was animated by an evil wizard who commanded it to attack the city. The Colossus returned to its inanimate state when the wizard was killed, but the wand the wizard used to bring it to life is rumored to lie at the bottom of the harbor.

54. At the dawn of time, a forgotten deity created a horde of divine treasures. When this power was beset by jealous, lesser gods, he hid his horde at the bottom of the **Water of Precious Things**. At this well, these treasures still wait to be recovered.



Among the supports said to keep the sky aloft are the Pillars of Heaven, towers found at the edges of the world that are watched over by mighty guardians. At least once, these towers have been attacked not in an attempt to end the world but as a means of getting the attention of the gods.

61

55. The **Tomb of the First Emperor** is a wondrous place, designed not only as a residence but also as a replica of the empire. Each room of the marvelous tomb is a scale model of one province. The First Emperor's chamber is a larger-scaled model of the Imperial Palace, guarded by row upon row of ceramic soldiers.

56. The **Rock of Dawn** is the sight of the sun's birth. Some tales hold that should the sun somehow be returned to this spot, it could be slain as could a mortal. Others claim that given the performance of certain magical rites, a new sun can be created here.

57. Some sages have speculated that all flowing waters, from the mundane to the magical, originate from a single source. Many special powers have been attributed to this **Source of All Rivers**, and many rare beings are said to reside there. None who have attempted to sail to this fanciful place have ever returned to tell the truth of the matter.

58. The **Isle of Aegir** is a magical place, for it sits near the undersea palace of the sea god. The weather is erratic, strange shapes can be seen traveling beneath the waves, and pilgrims from all across the world gather here.

59. Just as all rivers eventually flow into the sea, all seas eventually flow into a **subterranean netherworld**. Many things lost at sea have found their way to this dark realm. It is here that the race of nagas first came into existence, and they claim this nether region as their homeland.

60. The local peasantry can lead visitors to the fabled **Giants' Barrow**, where two immense rocks mark the graves of some oversized invaders. Builders once sought to cut slabs from these crude headstones, but as they worked, they heard mysterious music coming from beneath the earth. No one has dared approach the barrow since.

61. *See boxed.*

62. The **Lake Avernus** is a place most foul. Above it floats a stinking cloud of noxious gas so pungent that birds will go out of their way to avoid flying across the waterway. Most agree that this foul vapor is unnatural, but none have yet found a way to remove the curse of Lake Avernus.

63. At the gate to the underworld stands a **magical rock** of entrapment. Anyone touching this towering stone becomes imprisoned within it, unable to escape without magical aid from outside. The exact rites and spells used to free the prisoners of this wicked rock have been lost.

64. A particular ruler of a desert kingdom, whose queen hails from a mountainous, jungle-shrouded land, has built for her the famous **Hanging Gardens** on an artificial mountain range. This paradise contains an elaborate irrigation system used to simulate a rain forest. Rumor has it that there are countless secret passages and vaults hidden within the manufactured mountains.

66. Within the **Temple of Zeus** stands a giant statue of that god, fashioned entirely of precious metals. It is perhaps the most expensive sculpture ever constructed. The opening ceremonies of the Sacred Games are held at the feet of this monument, a tradition for which even war itself stops in the nation of the games' founding.

67. Somewhere there exists a **Floating City** built atop a deep, serene lake. The foundation of this city is built of surprisingly sturdy rafts of unknown design. Many builders dream of uncovering the secrets of the Floating City's construction.

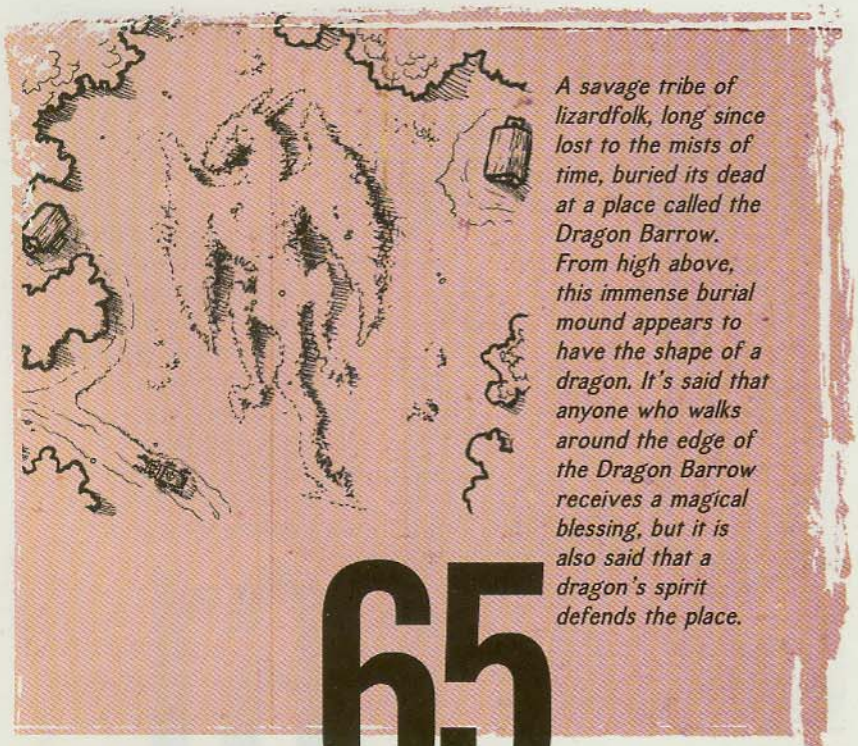
68. The River Acheron is the **River of Woe** where Charon the Ferryman carries the dead into the afterworld. Those of the living who are brave enough may sail across this river once, but only once; the return journey is forbidden, upon threat of divine curses.

69. The River Phlegeron is the **River of Fire**, another means to enter the land of the dead. There is no ferryman here, and none have tried to swim it, for the River of Fire burns brighter than any known flame. Anything, even an immortal soul, exposed to this unholy blaze is burned to ash and is forever beyond recovery.

70. The River Cocytus is the **River of Wailing**, and it is the last of the waterways running through the netherworld. Few would dare think of this river as means of travel, for it is a river not of water but of anguished souls who, in their misery, attempt to feast upon those living who come near.

71. The **Serapeum** is a temple to a god said to support the world, just as the arms of his statue support the temple walls. The statue, made of wood, is far from being a symbol of majesty and strength, for it is worm-eaten and rat infested. Nonetheless, stories say that if this statue is torn down, the world will collapse.

72. The **Impress of the Hands** is a rock into which are burned the handprints of a giant god. It is the site of worship for some, but others seek only to exploit the magical residue that the old god inadvertently left behind. Just what can be done with that residual



A savage tribe of lizardfolk, long since lost to the mists of time, buried its dead at a place called the Dragon Barrow. From high above, this immense burial mound appears to have the shape of a dragon. It's said that anyone who walks around the edge of the Dragon Barrow receives a magical blessing, but it is also said that a dragon's spirit defends the place.

65

power remains to be seen.

73. On a distant shore, a colonial power once established the city of **Ronnak**. When a supply vessel arrived there a year later, the city of Ronnak was gone. In its place stood only a wooden post into which was carved its name. There was no sign of any sort of calamity, yet the city's residents were never heard from again.

74. The **Heaven of Fresh Breezes** is a realm to which the worthy can go when they die. In this place blows a gentle, healing wind, one that is capable of curing the ailments of any mortal who finds her way there. Anyone seeking such a miracle cure should be warned that those smelling the fragrant breezes find them hard to leave behind.

75. Some stories mention the **Heaven of Broken Pots**, a place where the wicked go for punishment. This land is place of corrosion and decay. Only the souls of the dead can remain here without crumbling to dust. Everything else that finds its way here disintegrates in moments.

76. The **House of Dust** is a place where the souls of the dead sit in total apathy, drinking dust and eating stones. At one end of the house, there is a pile of crowns, each of which belong to long dead and forgotten kings who are servants of the House.

77. The **Valley of Oblivion** is where souls yet to be born drink the waters of the River Lethe to forget their previous lives. To some this place is a mere fancy; but others long to find it so they can rid themselves of the guilt they feel.

78. When the gods walked the earth, one such power set up a winter encampment atop the **Mountain of Snow**, forgetting that his mortal retainers would die of cold. None of these retainers left their patron's side as they froze to death. The god, struck by their loyalty, turned the mountain into a tomb for his servants, who can still be seen encased within its ice.

79. *See boxed.*

80. All offerings made to the gods ultimately end up in the same place, a cookery pot of gigantic proportions. Here, offerings of solid materials are ground up and mixed with liquid gifts to make the various elixirs of the gods. Any mortal drinking from this **great cauldron** might become immortal or cease to exist altogether, depending upon what brew is being mixed.

79

Somewhere on the seven seas exist the Clashing Islands, a pair of small, rocky isles between which flows a channel. Anything traveling this cliff-lined channel will find the Clashing Islands closing in to destroy them. If a means exists to safely pass this corridor, it is not known.

81. The **Shore of Corpses**, at the bottom of the World Tree, Yggdrasil, is a horrid realm where the dead lie rotting upon the ground. These corpses are devoured by the serpents that also gnaw upon the roots of Yggdrasil. Those traveling by means of the great tree should be wary, lest they become lost and end up here.

82. The **Pharos Lighthouse**, in addition to serving as a means of keeping ships from running aground, is also a popular temple to the god of the sea. It is the tallest structure ever built, and the shrine that sits atop its roof is said to be an ideal place for summoning weather.

83. The **Clanging Thrymgyol** is a magical gate in a long forgotten castle. Anyone touching or attempting to pass the gate is magically imprisoned within its lock. Only someone who has the key can open the Clanging Thrymgyol, and with it release those entrapped by the gateway's magic.

84. Ignorant of a new dispute between his god and the lake goddess, a priest established his shrine on an island in the middle of a local waterway. In retaliation, the lake goddess caused this site to sink beneath the waves, and it has been known as the **Lost Island** ever since. The treasures lost with the island shrine have never been recovered.

85. Yellow is the color of the earth, so the great waterway that sits at the bottom of the world is known as **Yellow Springs**. The springs are closely connected with death, perhaps because the worms that devour the dead are said to drink from these waters. Many miners refuse to dig too deep for fear of the proximity of the Yellow Springs.

86. At the rock called **Table-mên**, the kings of the land once sat, eating their last meal before leading their armies to victory against a powerful invading force. Some say that the presence of so many great leaders has left a psychic afterimage upon the Table-mên, one that can be tapped for power or inspiration.

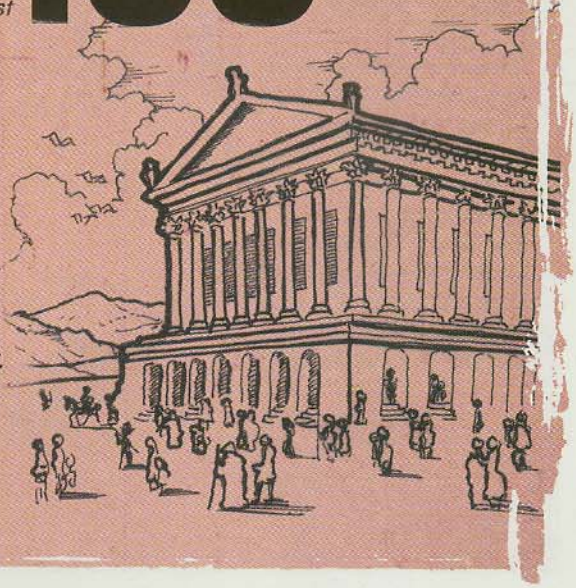
87. The world is flat, not round, and at its center sits the **Palace of the Four Winds**. This temple has an opening through its massive frame in each of the cardinal directions. Every god associated with each of these directions holds this place to be sacred and would strike down anyone daring to move against the palace and its residents.

88. On an island in a forbidding sea, an ancient and simple tribe resides in the shadow of a mountain range, one into which have been carved **gargantuan statues** of mythological figures by a long dead race of barbarians. No one knows how these statues were carved by so primitive a tribe.

89. The **Gate of Ishtar** is both a city entrance and a shrine to its namesake. It is the most frequently used access point to the city, so many are surprised

100

The giant Temple of Artemis is more than just a place of worship: It is also one of the most cosmopolitan trading posts ever built. Within the marble walls and golden columns of this massive compound, pilgrims and merchants from the most distant of lands meet. Most anything can be bought here, and most everything has, at one time, been left as an offering.



to learn that it has wondrous magical properties. Only a priestess of Ishtar can unlock this magical potential, and doing so would be impossible without witnesses.

90. Visitors to the otherworldly **Hall of Gimli** find that the chambers within are wholly empty. Prophecy holds that this hall will remain so until the time of the last battle, after which the surviving gods will claim Gimli as their home. The weight of this prophecy has made the hall a focal point of divination magic.

91. Who has not heard of the mysterious **Cliff City**? Once a teeming civilization lived there, or so investigators would claim. But all that remains are the buildings. There are no tools, no pieces of art, and no physical remains. Either the culture that was here vanished long ago, or it never existed in the first place.

92. In heaven, the **Shelf of the Slain** is a place where the greatest warriors of good are held in stasis until the time of the last battle. Anyone who can sneak past the divine guardian of this wonderful place might be able to steal one of these souls.

93. **Mount Mashu** guards the rising of the sun. Any who would have business with the heavenly orb must first circumvent this treacherous mountain and the giant beasts that reside here. The gargantuan animals can be overcome in combat, but they can also be dissuaded with words, as these mythical creatures possess the powers of speech and reason.

94. The gods themselves fear to enter the **Hall of the Giant King**, for this powerful creature is the leader of the giants and titans that oppose them. Perhaps a creature as small and insignificant as a mortal could infiltrate this titanic fortress to work the will of the gods or plunder its many treasures.

95. The **Realm of Day** is the land at the edge of the world in which resides the sun. In this luminous garden, plants bear gems that sparkle with eternal sunlight instead of fruit. Many treasure hunters have sought to claim a gem from this realm, and many explorers have looked to see what exists beyond it; none have returned.

96. Fables tell of the **Seven Caverns** from which mankind first emerged at the beginning of time. Many seek this place of legend, for it is said to hold within its walls the secrets of life itself. The enemies of mankind also seek this cave, but for another reason: These caverns are also held to be the place where mankind can be utterly destroyed.

97. In the **Vale of Enna**, where the spring goddess lives, there is only one season. The forests are forever in bloom, and the lake is always warm. The resident goddess leaves on occasion to visit her immortal husband. During this time, evil powers conspire to steal the eternal youth that reigns there.

98. The **Holder of Heat** is a magical fortress enshrouded in ever-burning flame. Many have attempted to enter and claim the treasures rumored to be kept within. None have managed, for the magic words that part the flames have long been forgotten.

99. Atop a distant mountain, far from arable land, there stands the **abandoned ruin** of an ancient capital. By all appearances, it was once a thriving metropolis, which leads one to wonder how it could have flourished in such a remote and barren locale. Perhaps the climate was once different, or perhaps there is more to this remote city than meets the eye.

100. *See boxed.*

101. **Hoddmimir's Wood** has existed since before the beginning of the many worlds, and it will continue to exist long after they are gone. In this eternal forest reside ancient, ageless beasts. These creatures gallivant across the cosmos, for through Hoddmimir's Wood, all forests are mystically connected.

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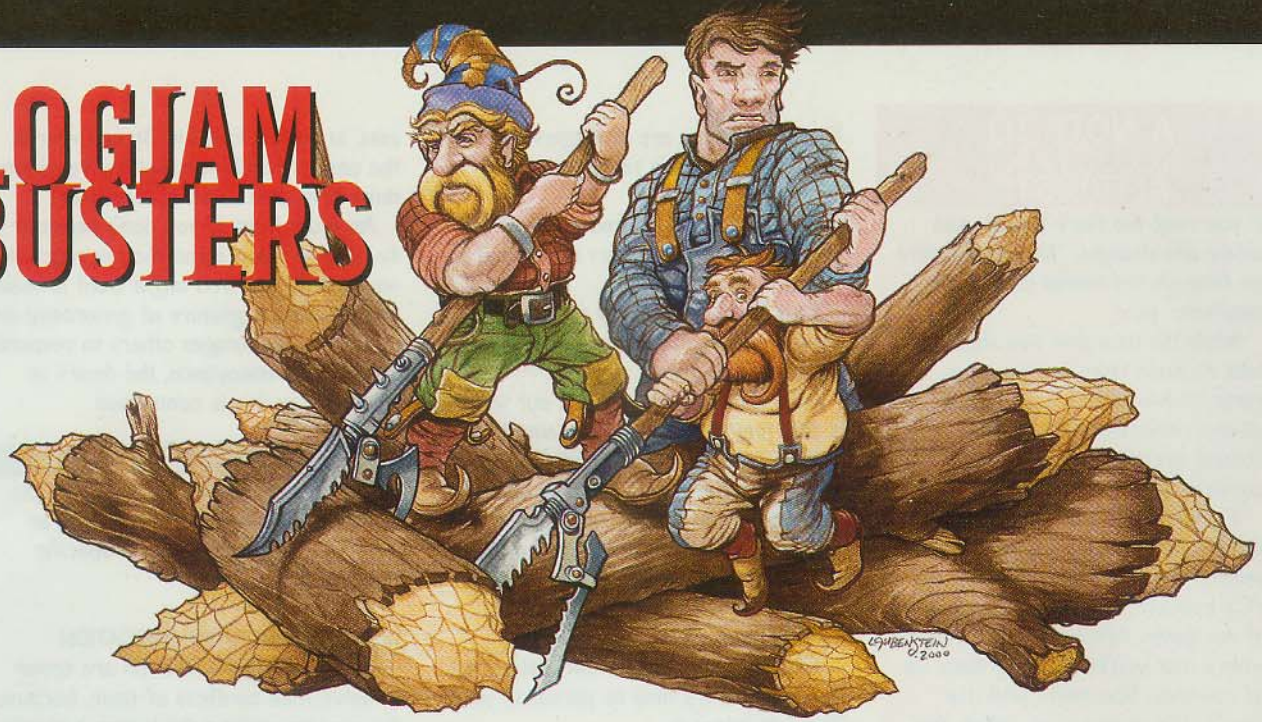


Helping Your DM Dig Out

by Robin D. Laws • illustrated by Jeff Laubenstein

Anyone who's been roleplaying for even a short time knows that some sessions go more smoothly than others. Some are simply magical: everybody's paying attention, the spirit of cooperation is high, and each new development is more entertaining than the last. Unfortunately, that coin has a flip side: sometimes a game can bog down. Concentration drifts, players get irked at one another, and the game comes to a halt.

We often assume that the task of avoiding these crashes rests entirely on the DM's shoulders. Certainly it's true that a skilled DM crashes less frequently than an inexperienced or uncertain one. But that's no reason why you, as a player, should meekly surrender to a troubled game session. The DM is only one of the people in the room. Everybody has influence over the conflicts that cause these problems. You can work to stop them from happening, or to get things quickly back on track when they do. Think of yourself as the DM's ally—as a member of the Legion of Logjam Busters.

TRAITS OF A SUCCESSFUL LOGJAM BUSTER

It's harder to bust a logjam as a player than a DM. To do the job, you'll need to exercise sensitivity, understanding, and diplomacy.

Sensitivity

Logjams are almost always the consequence of conflicting expectations. The conflict might arise between the DM and multiple players, a single player and the DM, or two or more players. To bust a logjam, you have to help reconcile these differences. You can't do this by loudly insisting on doing things your way. You will only make things worse by adding another aggrieved party to the conflict. A successful logjam buster must, above all, be sensitive to the tempers and egos of the other participants.

Make suggestions, not demands.

Let other people talk.

If some players have withdrawn from the game, ask them questions to draw them back in.

Like everybody else, you might be feeling a sense of irritation at the poor progress you're making in the game. Try to keep this irritation out of your voice; annoyance is contagious. Keep your tone calm and relaxed.

On the other hand, try to suppress your natural response to the obvious irritation of others. Accept the fact that your friends are frustrated or flustered. Listen past their tone of voice or annoyed gestures to hear what they want from the situation—aside from sharing their displeasure.

You are the DM's back-up, not his replacement. Be especially careful not to step on the DM's toes or threaten his authority or confidence. Avoid the sense that you're parachuting in to rescue him. Instead, be subtle in making your suggestions.

If you help improve the mood of the room and get people communicating again, you can turn your attention to the nature of the conflict.

Understanding

The factors that separate a great game from a terrible one aren't conscious. Nobody shows up to a game thinking, "I'm going to make sure things really suck tonight."

Sometimes these factors are totally beyond your control. If you're mentally tired at the beginning of a game, or you had a stressful day in the classroom or office, you might lack the emotional energy to play well with others. If a player comes to the table cranky, there's not much you can do, other

A NOTE TO RELUCTANT ALTRUISTS

If you read the fiery tunnel case study and thought, "No way would I go through the tunnel first," this note's for you.

While it's true that you shouldn't take reckless risks just to get a game back on track, you should always remember that logjam-busting sacrifices rarely go unrewarded.

If your fellow players are even slightly fair-minded, they'll begin to see that you're willing to put your PC's butt on the line for the good of the game. After a while, they'll worry that you're showing them up as cowards. You might find that they'll step up once you offer, for the umpteenth time, to sacrifice for the game, and volunteer to take the risk themselves.

Even if you play with a covey of shameless yellow-bellies, the DM will no doubt take note of the risks you're taking to keep his game on the rails. If he's worth his salt, he'll see to it that little rewards await you. He might award you bonus experience points, leave healing potions lying about for you to pick up, or give you interaction bonuses arising from your PC's reputation for bravery.

than to try to work around it. Most sessions can survive one player who arrives out of sorts, but few can survive two. There are times when the best thing to do is call it an early night.

The problems you can address are those that arise from conflicting expectations within the game. These conflicts almost always fall into one of the following categories:

Conflicts of communication: People are reacting to an in-game situation in incompatible ways because they're making radically different assumptions about it. The DM is either unwilling or unable to give the players the information they need to harmonize their assumptions.

Conflicts of taste: Different players want different pleasures out of gaming. DMs also have their own assumptions about what makes a good game, which might not match those of the players. The participants are at loggerheads because someone's tastes are not being met.

Once you've identified the type of conflict, you can start to try and solve it.

Find the logs: Identify the participants whose behavior or decisions are causing the logjam.

Goal identification: Figure out what it is that they want out of the situation. What would their character do if there wasn't another player (or plot obstacle) standing in the way?

Envision a solution: Before you suggest anything to anyone, envision the scenario in which each "log" gets equally close to his goal.

Now that you have a concrete solution in mind, it's time to persuade your "logs" to adopt it.

Diplomacy

Diplomacy isn't just about being nice and making people feel good. The true diplomat convinces others to accept compromises between genuinely incompatible goals. The following diplomatic techniques are your log-breaking tools:

Flexibility: The solution you envision is not your goal. Your goal is to get the game moving again. The solution is just a possible outcome, a direction in which to move. Be prepared to constantly revise your notion of the ideal solution as you help the "logs" negotiate with one another.

Invisibility: Don't let the players know that you've identified them as logs and that you're trying to move them towards a specific conclusion. As much as possible, encourage them to think that they're solving the problem and you're just helping them talk through it. Get them to state their goals and suggest ways of getting out of the problem, instead of telling them what their objectives are and what they ought to be doing to reach them.

Even-handedness: Logjams would be easier to break if you could just phone up a non-participating friend to come over and arbitrate the dispute for you. Until the gaming hobby gets big enough to support teams of roving negotiators, you'll have to adopt the role of mediator yourself. To succeed you'll have to set aside your own agenda as a player. That way, you're clearly working to help everyone. You must be ready to sacrifice your own character's interests, at least a little bit. Steer towards the easiest resolution, not the resolution most favorable to your character.

Ante up: Even if you don't necessarily need to make a sacrifice to reach the envisioned goal, you might want to make one anyway. A gesture of generosity on your part encourages others to respond in kind. Like annoyance, the desire to seem reasonable is contagious.

CASE STUDIES

Having mastered the general principle of logjam busting, it's time to look at them in practice, with some specific case studies.

Conflicts of Communication

Conflicts of communication are easier to solve than conflicts of taste, because the players causing the logjam typically have the same goal and simply differ on the means of achieving that goal. Put another way, they agree on strategy but disagree on tactics. Almost always, the cure for tactical conflicts is more information. Sometimes getting the information is as simple as asking the DM to refine his description of your surroundings. In other cases, the characters must seek additional information before acting.

Case of the Fiery Tunnel

Situation: You stand in a coffin-strewn dungeon chamber, the chalky remains of the vampires you've just slain are smoldering at your feet. You have two exits, but both of them give you pause. A thick portcullis has dropped across the archway through which you entered the chamber. Another tunnel leads away from the room, but the DM has described it as "ringed with fire."

Logjam: It looks like you'll be stuck in the chamber for a long time to come; your fellow players can't agree on a course of action. Allen wants to keep trying to raise the portcullis, even though he's already taken 20 and failed. Betty argues that the group should try the fiery tunnel, but Allen is dead set against this; he's sure the characters will be incinerated.

Solution: Listening to Allen and Betty argue, you realize that both have radically different assumptions about the dangers of the tunnel. Each has the same goal: They want to get out of the room. You identify this as a conflict of communication. Betty assumes the tun-

nel trap will do a manageable amount of damage to the characters as they rush through it; Allen has concluded that it's one of those "if you're dumb enough to go here, you're dead" dungeon features. You recall that Allen's PC in another campaign recently bought the farm because he misjudged the lethality of a similar trap.

You tell the DM that your character is going up to the lip of the tunnel to take a better look at the flames. You prompt him for details, and find out that the flames seem to hug close to the walls, and that they're orange and yellow—that is, not as hot as blue flames would be. You ask how much heat you feel standing outside the tunnel. "Not much," is the reply.

Armed with this new information, you try to persuade Allen that he's overestimating the damage his PC will take from the flames. He softens his position, but isn't ready to dive in. So you offer to make a sacrifice: You'll send your PC through the tunnel first. If he gets through safely, the others should follow. If not, Allen can keep looking for a secret door or lever to raise the portcullis.

You walk through the flame and take a piddling 12 points of damage. The others follow, and the logjam has broken.

Case of the Wizard's Lair

Situation: The group has just discovered that the mysterious figure behind a near-fatal attempt on your patron's life is the dread wizard Maldirin, who lives in a gigantic, imposing manor overshadowing the city. You've clashed with his minions and heard fearful whispers of his great personal power and the many ingeniously lethal traps protecting his lair.

Logjam: Allen says that the group should persuade their patron to move out of town; there's no way you can defeat such a powerful wizard. Betty argues for a frontal assault on the manor, catching Maldirin and his minions by surprise. Cathy says that the group should adopt disguises to attend the conclave of wizards Maldirin will soon hold in his manor's great hall. Each player heaps contempt on the others' proposed solutions.

Solution: The differing assumptions the players are making here are not so much about the facts of the situation, but about the nature of genre rules that the DM uses in determining what is and isn't likely in his world. Allen assumes a gritty, realistic world that rewards sober, calculating responses to problems, even when they aren't remotely heroic. Betty assumes the opposite: a Robert E. Howard-esque world where any problem can be solved with an upheld battleaxe and a courageous battle-cry. Cathy sees the DM as more of an Ian Fleming type, who'll let you waltz into the villain's lair, engage him in repartee, and count on your wits to get out of the resulting death-trap. Each player's proposed course of action is correct, presuming that his or her impression of the DM's style is also right. It's up to you to resolve the logjam by figuring out who has the DM pegged.

The DM isn't going to tell you what his style is. If you've been playing in his games for a while, you can figure it out by looking at the group's past failures and successes. So far, what's gotten you further: bravery, cleverness, or a combination of the two? Have your past adventures been more like *Conan the Barbarian*, *Dr. No*, or *Saving Private Ryan*?

If you're new to this DM's style, you can give him the chance to slip you some hints by thinking out loud. He won't tell you what to do outright, but he'll likely provide little comments pointing you in the right direction.

Once you've decided who's right, make the case to the players. The idea that various DMs evaluate dangers differently might be new to them. Again, offer to put your money where your mouth is by making your PC take point in the operation. You might also want to build a plan with an escape route, so you can pull out if your conclusions turn out to be wrong.

Case of the Ravening Hordes

Here's a case of communication conflict for you to solve yourself:

Situation: Badly injured, the group flees from a town where the citizens have been seized by a mysterious madness prompting them to attack all outsiders. Betty's character has a bear trap clamped around her leg; she can't keep running, and the ravening townsfolk are sure to pursue. You pass a dilapidated hut. The door swings open. A bearded, dirty-robed old man beckons you inside and offers to hide you.

TASTE GROUPS

To bust logjams of taste, you must figure out what the players want out of the game. Many fall into the categories below. Learn these categories, and figure out which of them the players in your group belong to. Not everyone belongs to a single category. A given player might be, say, 80% wargamer and 20% method actor, but these stereotypes hold true in a surprising number of cases.

Power gamers enjoy accumulating levels, skills, feats, magic items, and other things that beef up their characters. They like to do this by the most efficient means possible. Although they can be bribed into acting out their characters' thoughts and motivations, they mostly look at their PCs as pieces on a board, like the top hat in *Monopoly*.

Steam venters like to kick butt. They're cousins of the power gamer, but, as far as they're concerned, a character sheet full of cool abilities is just a means to an end: the joy of trouncing imaginary enemies. Their attention wanders between fights.

Wargamers like to devise effective tactics within the fictional world of the game, which they want to be gritty, realistic, and logically consistent. They don't mind a bit of drama, as long as it doesn't interfere with the logic of cause and effect within the world, or interfere with their suspension of disbelief. Their characters are stand-ins for themselves, or at least the part of them that displays tactical finesse.

Method actors focus on characterization and motivation. They identify intensely with their PCs and fiercely guard their control over them. They'd sooner halt play than have their PCs do things they consider out of character. Some method actors give each PC a distinct personality, while others always stick to a single type they particularly like. (Usually in a list of styles, this type is called the "role-player," but that's confusing, because it's also the generic term

Please see Taste... on page 60

Taste... continued

for people who play D&D and games like it.)

Storytellers like drama and the sense that they're participating in a story with the same sense of building excitement you find in a movie or TV show. They like to play vivid characters like those in the source material they enjoy. They'll make decisions to help move the story along if the DM emphasizes drama, but they might feel lost in games favoring power acquisition, tactics, or open-ended narrative.

The guys who just sit in their chairs are an oft-ignored group. They show up dutifully but remain quiet and follow the leads of the more extroverted players. They're having fun but are undemonstrative about it. They rarely cause logjams but never propose ways out of them, either. They're worthy of mention here because they're useful allies: If you're forceful but polite (these guys are easily spooked), you can convince them to take logjam-breaking actions with your character.

Logjam: One half of the group, led by Betty, sees the hermit as their only hope in a deadly situation. The others hold fast to Allen's "never trust an old hermit" policy.

Solution: So, what do you do?

Conflicts of Taste

Conflicts of taste are tougher to resolve than communication problems. Here, the stuck players agree on the nature of the situation but are still at loggerheads over a response to it. These conflicts arise because we all get different things out of the roleplaying experience. The actions we want our PCs to take reflect these tastes. See the sidebar for descriptions of the most common tastes in roleplaying groups.

The first step toward smoothing over these conflicts is to recognize that there is no right or wrong when it comes to taste. There is no proper, accepted way to have fun. Although this seems like a simple and obvious thing to say, it's difficult to put it into practice. Almost all of us think our personal tastes in music, movies, or gaming styles are right and that contrary tastes are appalling and perplexing. This attitude is fine when it comes to traditional forms of entertainment, which don't need a crowd of cooperative participants to experience. But we can't let it infect our thinking when we roleplay with a group of friends. Instead, we have to find compromises between everybody's wishes.

"Sardarin has gone off to the goblin king's encampment, unarmed, to negotiate a settlement."

Case of the Disruptive Tavern Brawl

Situation: You're in a hostile town ruled by an enemy, investigating his operation. You've been warned to keep a low profile to avoid alerting his guards. You're gathering rumors in a tavern when a gigantic orc comes over to bully and insult you. One of the players, Dave, decides that he'll draw his scimitar on the orc and start a fight.

Logjam: Your DM enforces realistic cause-and-effect. If Dave starts a fight, the guards will come. You'll either be captured and tortured, or forced to flee. Either way, you're unlikely to get the information you need to stop the invasion and will waste at least the rest of the session dealing with the bad consequences of this rash act. You're not in a logjam now—but you will be if you don't dissuade Dave, pronto.

Solution: Dave is a steam venter. He likes to fight. Tonight's adventure has been all investigation and no action, so he's gotten bored and wants to start something.

You must convince him that a fight is just around the corner, one he has a better chance of winning. Steam venters like to fight, but they don't like to lose.

If Dave does back down, you must keep an eye out for a gratuitous fight with less serious consequences, which you can then maneuver him into.

Case of the Reluctant Rogue

Situation: A new session begins after an epic storyline that lasted for many weeks. Your characters are gathered at a celebration when the king's chamberlain approaches you, asking you to explore a tunnel network recently discovered near the summer palace.

Logjam: Ellen, who plays the party's rogue, hotly refuses. "I am no friend of kings and princes! I have sworn never to aid the mighty. It is the people I fight for!"

You know that your DM is the type who carefully prepares his scenarios in great detail. They're great fun, but you have to be ready to meet him halfway and go along with the basic premise of

his adventures; he's an uncomfortable improviser. You see the crestfallen look on the DM's face and know that he doesn't know how to deal with this surprise rebellion against his meticulous planning.

Ellen is a method actor. Since the last session, she's just as carefully prepared a six-page backstory of her character's past life, including his many run-ins with royal authority. She felt that her character wasn't fleshed out enough, and now that she's added detail to him, she can't make herself believe that he'd help the king.

Solution: You must reconcile this collision between two methodical thinkers who find it hard to abandon ideas once they've developed them. You must decide which of the two is the more flexible thinker. You take Ellen aside and tell her that she might find out something that she can later use against the king if her character investigates the tunnels near the summer palace. Ellen agrees that this is a way for her character to go on the mission without contradicting her backstory.

Case of the Back-Channel Diplomat

Situation: You're preparing to assault the stronghold of the goblin king. Much of the evening has been given over to a meticulous planning session led by Frank and Gina, the group's wargamer and power gamer respectively. During this time, Harold, a storyteller, has grown visibly bored. When dawn comes and with it, the time for the raid, Harold announces that his character isn't there. "Sardarin has gone off to the goblin king's encampment, unarmed, to negotiate a settlement."

Logjam: Everybody groans. They know it would be out of character for the goblin king to do anything but hold Harold's character hostage, at best. Previous adventures have established his unrelenting savagery and his personal vow to slay the lot of you. Even if they leave Harold's PC to a grim fate, their hours of planning are now scotched. The goblins have been warned; the adventurers have lost the element of surprise.

Solution: Ideally, you'd have noticed during the planning session that Harold was getting bored and found some character interaction for him to take part in. Your character could approach his and reveal a secret, start an argument, or otherwise make him feel he's advancing his PC's personal storyline.

Now all you can do is plead with Harold to retract his announced action. (Even a DM who's normally a hard-liner on retractions might look the other way here. He doesn't want the entire evening's work tossed out, either.) Tell him that no self-respecting movie script would spend so much time dramatizing the planning and then make it irrelevant through a character's surprise action. Suggest ways in which the upcoming fight might advance his story, or describe roleplaying opportunities likely to arise from its aftermath.

Identify the taste group to which each of the players belongs, and you'll find it easier to enlist their aid when busting logjams.

Finally, here's another case study for you to solve yourself:

Case of the Flying Battering Ram

Situation: Gina, the game's resident power gamer, arrives at the session grinning. Last week, you ended with a trip to town to get supplies. She's devised an elaborate plan to combine a couple of spells with a non-standard magic item she owns: The result is a flying battering ram, which she plans to ride through the dungeons, busting down one door after another.

Logjam: Your DM hates silly stuff like that, and you know he's going to do his best to outlaw it. Gina's plan depends on a picky interpretation from each of the spell descriptions. She's come armed with a mighty list of definitions printed out from www.dictionary.com. You know she's going to enjoy the process of arguing as much, if not more, than actually getting a flying battering ram. The rest of the group moans and sinks back into their chairs, prepared for several hours of wrangling between DM and power gamer.

Solution: So, what do you do, logjam buster? D

WHAT'S YOUR SOLUTION?

Send your answer to any of these case studies by sending a note to **scalemail@wizards.com** (with the subject line "Logjam Solution") or "Scale Mail" c/o *Dragon Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055.

Everyone around him has a secret, and Fool Wolf must learn them before the First Evil returns.

The Hounds of Ash

BY J. GREGORY KEYES

ILLUSTRATED by JUSTIN SWEET

WHEN THE ASHES CAME TO LIFE, Fool Wolf knew that the fever from the wound in his shoulder had finally reached his head. Or it might have been the dehydration, or both. Whatever the case, it was a bad sign.

He had to admit, however, that the hallucinations improved things in some ways. For two days he had trudged the table-flat plains of the Strictured Land, his feet sinking to the ankles in gray-black dust so fine that even the motion of his feet surrounded him with a cloud of it. Now his nostrils and lips were crusted with soot, he coughed up black mucus, and pebbles of grit gathered in the corners of his eyes. In the day the sun beat him like a blacksmith's hammer, and at night his breath smoked from the cold. The wound in his shoulder pulsed blood and pus, and his waterskin was almost empty.

Still, if nothing else, his new madness broke the monotony. His fever lifted the ash like fog, congealing it into the forms of trees, boulders, rushes, flowers, and grass. A road appeared beneath his feet, hard and level. It formed, like the trees, a stone's cast ahead of him and dissolved the same distance behind and to each side. Birds clotted into being, flitted to the edge of his insanity, and decayed into plumes of dust.

The trees offered some shade from the sun, at least. He would have been happier if the landscape had some color in it, rather than the same uniform charcoal hue as the plain, but Fool Wolf had a long list of rather-nots that took precedence over the quality of his fever dreams. He would rather not be in this forsaken place, for instance, he would rather not be wounded, he would rather he wasn't being pursued by perhaps the most powerful sorcerer in the world.

Interesting, murmured the goddess who made her home within Fool Wolf's bones. The goddess, of course, was his greatest rather-not of all. Without her, none of the others would exist.

Fool Wolf ignored the comment. Chugaachik's interests ran toward torture, perversion, and violent murder, all of which she used Fool Wolf's body to accomplish whenever he was foolish or desperate enough to invoke her power. If she found something "interesting," it was better not to know what she meant.

Instead, he sat down on a small shelf of stone that had assembled itself from the ash, scooted until he was beneath the shade of an unreal date palm, and drew out his waterskin. There were two mouthfuls of water in it, and he took one, letting it remain in his mouth for a while, trickling it only slowly down his throat.

Ebony cattails waved in a breeze, and a coal-colored heron waded in a dark simulacrum of water. He dipped his hand into the "stream" and brought up only ash. He managed a sardonic laugh.

It's not fever, you know, Chugaachik said. *What you see is real.*

"Is it?"

I see it, and your fever doesn't affect me.

"What's doing it? Gods? Ghosts?"

We haven't passed near a god since we entered the Strictured Land.

That was unusual in and of itself. The world teemed with gods. Every stream, tree, forest, stone and hilltop had at least a minor god in residence. The great gods—those who claimed to have created the world itself—were more removed, living in the sky, the highest mountains, the deepest forests, far from Human Beings.

"None?" he asked.

None.

"Then what is this?" He waved at the monocolor phantoms around him.

I don't know.

"You seem to know very little these days. Are you ready to tell me what is drawing us onward or where we are going?"

The same sorcery that compelled us here clouds my memory, the goddess answered. *As well you know.*

"I wish I could tell when you are lying." Fool Wolf sighed and stood shakily. The summoning had first affected him only in sleep, but now he could feel a sort of lodestone in his head, pointing the direction but growing red-hot if he rested too long.

I do know we must reach our destination before Lepp Gaz. Chugaachik offered.

"Why?"

I don't know.

Fool Wolf rolled his eyes in disgust. "Well, since I left him sealed in the mountain behind us, we have a chance of that, at least. What about Uzhdon and Inah? They're probably there already."

Mentioning Inah brought a hard twang of emotion he had come to expect, though he still didn't understand it. The daughter of the Python King was beautiful, of course, and his memory of her bare, brown curves and smoky green eyes aroused him even now, but he had had many lovers. And Inah could be cruel—she had tried to starve him to death when they first met. She had abandoned him to his death in the city of Pethvang to travel with Uzhdon, a man who had tried to kill Fool Wolf on several occasions.

Still, he missed her.

He started off again, brushing his way through the colorless and frangible leaves of tamarisk, olive, and fernpear trees.

At sundown, monsters reared from the dust, twin lions with the heads of jackals. With their paws folded beneath them, their heads towered as high as twelve men. The sight struck steel to flint inside of Fool Wolf's skull, igniting a vision he had had before only in the depths of sleep.

HIS FEET TOUCHED upon gray stone, a plain that stretched away to jagged peaks in very direction. Two of them exhaled plumes of dark ash. He walked, and after a time came to a city of the same stone. Flanking the broad way were twin statues, crouching figures of jackal-headed lions beside which Fool Wolf was ant-sized. Their eyes gleamed like fishscales, and the sight of them brought blood to his loins and jolted a fierce anger through him. He laughed, Chugaachik's laugh.

Beyond the statues, the city was massive cubes and columns, and a thousand thousand kneeling men and women in rags. They seemed to be chanting a hymn as gray dust from the sky settled on their shoulders.

Then something parted the crowd in the distance: a man in the mask of a black-beaked bird. A darkly patterned kilt his only clothing, his flesh was so white it seemed to shine. The crowd shouted a name to him, but Fool Wolf could not make it out. The masked man came on, white light blazing through the eyeholes of his mask, until he stood directly in front of Fool Wolf.

In one hand the masked figure held the leashes of four hounds, or what Fool Wolf first took for hounds. One was as white as his master, so gaunt as to be almost skeletal, with sapphire eyes. The next was more tiger than dog, hunch-shouldered like the grass bears of Fool Wolf's native steppes. The third, sleek and gray, had the head of a hawk, and the fourth was a black, squirming mass that might have been made of worms.

Now Fool Wolf wanted to run, but his feet were rooted. The earth began to tremble, and the hounds drew so near the stench of their breath made him want to vomit.

The masked figure halted, regarded him for a long moment, then removed his mask.

The face was so magnificent that Fool Wolf wanted to weep, and he feared the beauty was so terrible he would die from the mere sight of it. But then the face changed, and became the dark, narrow, high-cheekboned face of a Mang. Fool Wolf's face.

These were the statues. This was the valley. But on the plain before him, not even a brick stood to suggest a city had ever been there.

Fool Wolf caught a motion from the corner of his eye, just in time. Something large, gray, and four-legged raced toward him, leaping even as he turned. Fool Wolf dropped and rolled on his shoulder and was nearly blinded by appalling pain—he'd rolled onto the shoulder one of Lepp Gaz's men had impaled with an arrow. A grotesque howl he hardly recognized as his own tore from his throat, but he managed to draw the cleaver-like sword he had stolen in the city of Nah.

The creature was still for an instant, facing him. Aside from the fact that it was the same gray-black as everything else in the valley—right down to its eyes—it was the emaciated hound from his vision.

That's a very dangerous thing, Chugaachik informed him.

"Is it a god?"

I've never seen anything like it. But it will kill you unless you call on my strength.

"No."

Look around you. You fear the little games I play when you free me, I know. But who shall I play them on here?

Fool Wolf raised his sword. "Inah is here somewhere. You'll find her if I let you."

She betrayed you, fool! She left you to drown and went with your enemy, Uzhdon. What do you care about her?

"That's my affair," Fool Wolf replied, about the same time that the creature leapt at him.

He held his ground till the last instant, then dodged aside, dropping a decapitating blow to the monster's neck. Braced for a shock, Fool Wolf was surprised when all he felt was a thin, gritty resistance. The blade followed through into the ground.

The creature snarled, pawed at him, then ran back off across the plain. Fool Wolf watched it go, breathing deeply, gripping his aching arm.

"Not so dangerous after all," he commented.

It will be, in time, Chugaachik promised.

"How do you know?"

When Chugaachik didn't answer after twenty breaths, Fool Wolf shrugged and looked around. The beast, whatever it was, had collapsed into dust by then.

"That's the first time you've bade me invoke you since this whole mess began," he noticed. "In fact, you spent two months cowering as deep in my bones as you could burrow without even whispering to me, something you've never done since I was cursed with you. Now all of a sudden—since we entered the Strictured Land—you've become your old self again. What's changed?"

Invoking me gives the summoning more power over us. It was prudent to avoid that, during the journey. But the summoning is over. We're here, now. We've reached the place we were called to.

She was right, Fool Wolf realized. The lodestone in his head no longer pointed anywhere.

I didn't want to come here, she continued. *I do not like being enspelled, because few are powerful enough to do it. Very few, and they are very dangerous. Even Lepp Gaz did not have that power of old, but he has found it now. But you've brought us here, and now our only choice is to fight and win. I'm ready to fight again. Prudence was never much fun.*

"Fine," Fool Wolf said, though he was certain she still wasn't telling him everything. "If this is the end of our trail, Uzhdon and Inah ought to be here, too," he reasoned.

He noticed he was on a high point in the plain—a gentle rise, unnoticeable from a distance, scarcely noticeable even when standing on it. Perhaps where he stood had been a plaza or something similar—someplace without trees or high features, for no apparitions stood in the way of his view. He could see the whole plateau, all the way to the mountains.

Back the way he had come he noticed the faintest plume of dust. Nearer, only half a league of so away, he saw a little oasis of shadow trees.

"There you are," he muttered, starting toward the oasis.

AS FOOL WOLF'S phantasmagoric landscape merged with that of the oasis, he found himself confronting a ridiculously large sword—a sword-colored sword, wielded by a large, dark-skinned man with auburn hair and curling tattoos over his eyebrows. The eyebrows were presently raised in an expression of extreme surprise.

"Hello, Uzhdon, Opal of Nah," Fool Wolf said.

In reply, the sword rose a bit higher, presumably for better chopping. Despite its almost comical size, Uzhdon wielded it like a switch.

"Remember your promise," Fool Wolf said. "You aren't supposed to kill me until we're done with this."

"Are you really Fool Wolf?" Uzhdon asked, "or just another of these smoke spirits?"

"What color am I, Uzhdon?" Fool Wolf asked.

The warrior grunted. "You aren't the same as the rest, I agree, but—I left you . . ."

"You left me to drown. I don't blame you for being surprised to see me, but it *is* me."

Uzhdon lowered his weapon slowly.

"Fool Wolf!" Inah appeared from behind a tree. "You finally made it!"

She was just as he remembered, golden-skinned, lithe, with hair like midnight. She threw herself into his arms, and in an instant his head was full of her faintly snaky scent. The feel of her flesh against his was shockingly good.

He pushed her back to arm's length. "*You* could be more surprised," he said. "You left me to die, too."

"Not a violation of our agreement," Uzhdon sheepishly pointed out.

In one hand the masked figure held the leashes of four hounds . . .

"I was aware of that at the time," Fool Wolf told him. "I expected you to leave me." He looked Inah full in the eyes, something his people did only when they were delivering an insult. "I guessed you would leave me, too."

Inah flashed her pearly teeth. "I knew you would survive—you always manage to float to the surface."

"I knew you would leave me," Fool Wolf went on, "by the way you were looking at Uzhdon. What I don't know is exactly why."

Inah glanced at Uzhdon. "Fool Wolf and I will walk for a bit," she told the warrior. "Alone."

"Inah, he is evil," Uzhdon warned.

"There you go with that word again," Inah replied. "Come on, Fool." She tugged at his hand.

They walked through what seemed to be a well-tended garden on paths through weaving topiaries and rock formations, along canals full of lilies, past stelae spidered in strange characters.

"Well?" Fool Wolf broke the silence.

"Uzhdon keeps trying to explain this word 'evil' to me," Inah said. "I don't really understand."

"I don't either. Except that whatever evil is, apparently I am it."

"Yes, he's mentioned that before, too."

"That's Uzhdon. He's always either standing still or galloping, nothing in between. There's no doubt in him. You aren't like that, though. Are you going to tell me why you left me to die, after all I've done for you?"

"Shall we count how many times I saved your life?" Inah asked. "If we score it, I don't think you will come out ahead." She leaned close. "Besides, shouldn't we let our muscles get reacquainted, before more of this tiresome talking? Uzhdon talks all the time." She looked him up and down. "There's that shoulder, but I'm sure we could work around that."

That was a pretty powerful temptation, even in his state of near dehydration, but Fool Wolf shook his head. "Why are you here?" he demanded.

She chewed her lip petulantly, then shrugged. "At first I was in this because you were. I was curious to discover what was making you walk at night. Then we met Uzhdon, and it was clear the two of you had been drawn together."

"And then both drawn here."

"Yes. But when I saw Uzhdon, I suddenly felt the pull, too. I started having visions and then nightmares about a man in a bird mask, with four beasts—"

"I know the vision," Fool Wolf said.

"Uzhdon was going to leave you, no matter what I did, and I somehow didn't think it was wise to let him go off on his own. He isn't like you or me, you know." She smiled again. "Besides, Pethvang was coming apart. I knew your goddess would see you through, and I knew you would follow us. I figured I could keep an eye on Uzhdon until then."

"I'm happy you had faith in me."

"Fool Wolf, don't pretend you wouldn't have done the same. I know you that well, at least. What did you think, that I wanted that oaf for a mate?"

"I—"

"He's not a very inventive lover."

Fool Wolf tasted the implications of that and didn't like them very much. He didn't say so—instead he put on his best stranger-in-the-girl's-tent smile and said, "Well no, of course not, not compared to me. Don't you know I'm the best lover that ever lived?"

"You were my first. How could I know that?"

Hoping Uzhdon was within shouting distance, Fool Wolf reached for her. "Well, let me remind you, then. Watch the shoulder."

"AND SO THIS LEEP GAS is following you?" Uzhdon said, later.

Fool Wolf swallowed another mouthful of water before answering. Uzhdon had plenty of water and, at Inah's insistence, was sharing it.

"Lepp Gaz," he corrected. "He's a sorcerer. He steals souls and tattoos them on his body. They give him the strength and power of his victims. His own soul he keeps elsewhere."

"An evil sorcerer, then," Uzhdon reasoned. "When he gets here, I shall slay him."

"Be my guest," Fool Wolf replied. "If you think you can do it. It won't be easy, though." He paused for another drink. "I think it's Gaz who called us to this place." *And Chugaachik claims Lepp Gaz is her brother. And despite her power, even she fears him,* he almost finished. But he couldn't think why he should tell Uzhdon that.

"Aha. Your sorcerer means to awake the First Evil," Uzhdon asserted. He poked a blunt, callused finger at Fool Wolf. "I suspect you do, too. The evil god you keep in your body was drawn here by the Evil."

"I see," Fool Wolf replied, happier than ever that he hadn't confirmed the link between Chugaachik and Lepp Gaz. "You were drawn here too. Are you therefore evil?"

Uzhdon looked surprised, like a child who has just heard the last thing he expected to hear. "I bear Hukop," he explained, "my godsword. My totem is the Seven Bearded Hawk, who defeated the First Evil ages ago. Naturally we have been called to defeat him once again."

"And Inah? Why was she summoned here?"

"To aid me. She has a powerful spirit in her as well."

"Yes. She's half god, the daughter of the Tattooed Python King. But why do you think she's here to help you?"

"The Seven-Bearded Hawk was assisted in destroying the Evil by Mehas, the Snake of the Fourth Thunderbolt. I believe her soul is that of Mehas, at least in part."

"I see. And so how will Lepp Gaz—who is, by the way, as much my enemy as you are—how are the two of us going to awake this First Evil? And for that matter, where is it?"

"I don't know, but be assured I won't give you the chance. I will slay the sorcerer, and if you attempt anything sinister, I shall slay you as well, despite my oath. You've tricked me with your honorless ways before. You won't do so again. Better I break my vow and suffer personal dishonor than see the whole world under the heel of the First Evil."

"Why would he put the whole world under his heel?"

"Because he's evil," Uzhdon said. "He tried once before."

"According to your legends."

"According to the holy and uncorrupted facts of the matter my people have passed down for generations. And to Hukop."

"Well, I see I can't argue with you," Fool Wolf said.

"Because you know I'm right," Uzhdon said.

"No," Fool Wolf said, scratching his cheek, "for the same reason I wouldn't argue with a pile of dog dung."

"No need to be unfriendly," Uzhdon replied, his eyes widening.

"Weren't you just talking about killing me?"

"Only if it becomes necessary, and then without malice or ill will," Uzhdon explained, his voice betraying a bit of hurt.

"Well, that will be a great comfort," Fool Wolf said. "Meantime, could we discuss a plan? Lepp Gaz will be here soon."

"So you say. If it's true, it's no matter—none can slay me in other than a fair fight while I carry Hukop."

"Lepp Gaz has an impressive sword, as well," Fool Wolf said. "Yours is bigger, but his has more sting. And he has no soul in his body—I've seen him cut nearly in half and survive."

"Besides," Inah put in, "just because you can't be killed doesn't mean we can't."

"That's true," Uzhdon said. "Let me do all of the fighting, then. I wouldn't want you hurt."

"He has a lot of men with him," Fool Wolf said. "He disguised himself as your brother, Ilupor, and has some of his followers."

"He *what*?" Uzhdon bolted up to his full height, eyes flashing. "What became of my brother?"

"I suspect he is tattooed on the sorcerer's skin. As I said, that's how Gaz gets his power."

Uzhdon trembled with rage, and tears squeezed from his

eyes. "I shall—" he stopped, suddenly, and his eyes narrowed. "Is this one of your tricks? Are you trying to trick me into slaying my own brother? Fool Wolf, I warn you—"

He broke off as a beast suddenly erupted from the foliage. At first Fool Wolf thought it was the same creature that had attacked him earlier, but as it leapt over Inah and onto Uzhdon, he saw that it was one of the other hounds from the vision, the sleek one with the head of a hawk.

It also seemed much more substantial than Fool Wolf's attacker, for its claws savaged great gashes in the warrior's shoulders. Impressively, Uzhdon kept his feet during the first rush and, more impressively, managed to hurl the beast off of him. In an instant, he had Hukop poised over his head. He struck down, splitting the beast in half.

It didn't stay in two halves, however. Color poured into it like oil across sunlit water, and as it thus shimmered, it came back together. Now it appeared exactly as it had in Fool Wolf's visions—sleek and gray, but an altogether different shade from the all-pervading ash. Its eyes flashing with unmistakable glee, it turned and ran off across the plain, as Uzhdon sank to his knees, a wail of inconsolable grief tearing from his throat. Hukop dropped from his hands.

Fool Wolf continued to watch the hawk-headed beast. It did not vanish when it reached the limits of the unreal landscape, but continued loping back in the direction Lepp Gaz was coming from.

"Uzhdon?" Inah knelt beside the big man. "Uzhdon, are you well? What's the matter?"

Uzhdon turned a blood and ash-streaked face toward them, his eyes wide and uncomprehending.

"Hukop is gone," he murmured.

"Your sword is right there," Inah soothed.

"It's only metal, now," Uzhdon groaned. "My totem is gone. The Seven-Bearded Hawk is gone."

"Horse Mother," Fool Wolf swore. At the edge of the trees, the other beast—the one which had attacked him earlier—appeared and vanished, appeared again, stalking the circumference of the spectral gardens. Another of the vision-monsters was with it—the wormy mass that only resembled a dog or cat in the vaguest way.

"We have to get out of here," Fool Wolf said. "Now."

Uzhdon shook his head as if clearing water from his ears, then came to his feet. He lifted his sword with obvious effort. Without the god in it, it must have been incredibly heavy. "Take Inah," He murmured. "I stand and fight."

"I'm very impressed by that plan," Fool Wolf said. "Come on, Inah."

"Wait. Where? Where can we run? What if they just run around him and follow us? Then we'll just be one fewer when they catch us."

"We're already fewer," Fool Wolf whispered in her ear. "Look at him trying to hold that sword."

Let me deal with them. Chugaachik said. *I can kill all of them—the beasts, Lepp Gaz, his warriors. I can end this now.*

"End what now, Chugaachik?" Fool Wolf asked the goddess, softly. "What's happening?"

He didn't get an answer, and the gaunt beast suddenly bounded toward him, just as the other lurched toward Inah.

Fool Wolf whipped his sword out and ran straight at his attacker. At the last moment he suddenly changed direction, flinging himself toward the hound attacking Inah. He buried the edge of his weapon in its skull, wrenched it out, and hacked again, into the thick neck. It was like chopping into a bag of sand. The beast reared up and swiped at him with a massive paw. Fool wolf ducked and cut at the neck from underneath. The head burst into a cloud of ash. The body held together for a moment longer, then collapsed.

He spun, wondering why the other beast hadn't hit him yet, and saw Uzhdon had it from behind in a wrestler's hold, arms locked under its paws. The warrior's arms bulged with effort. Abruptly, the whole beast collapsed. Overbalanced, Uzhdon tumbled to the ground.

They will be back, Chugaachik told Fool Wolf. *Stronger.*

"We have to move," Fool Wolf said. "Find a better place to fight these things."

Inah caught his arm with her fingers and clamped there. It hurt. "I am not without power, Fool Wolf. You know that. Why did you turn your back on the beast attacking you to battle mine?"

"Inah, you saw what happened to Uzhdon."

"So? You've fought two of these things now, and nothing happened to you."

"That's right. Because I have an ordinary hunk of metal to start with." He waved the heavy blade around. "No god in this. Nothing for them to steal."

"You've tricked me with your honorless ways before. You won't do so again."

"I don't even have a weapon—oh!"

"Yes. What happens if they steal the half of you that is a god? Do you want to find out?"

She pursed her lips. "Maybe it doesn't work that way. After all, you have a goddess in you—"

"—and if I invoked her, I would probably lose her."

Inah tilted her head and placed her fists on her hips. "Isn't that what you want? To be rid of her curse?"

"Yes. But not if she gets a body. Isn't that right, Chugaachik?"

You have no idea what you're talking about, sweet one. Uzhdon's sword was a special thing.

"Those beasts were the hounds of ash," Uzhdon said. "They were the servants of the First Evil. They herald his return."

"But what did the hound do to Hukop?" Inah asked.

Uzhdon grimaced. "Devoured him, I think. These phantoms need sustenance, the lifeblood of gods, to give them true form. When they all have form, they will summon the First Evil."

"Do your sacred texts say that?" Fool Wolf asked.

Uzhdon bit his lip. "Not exactly. But it makes sense, doesn't it?"

Fool Wolf hid an amazed expression. "Anyway," he said, "we should move."

"Again, to where?" Inah asked.

Fool Wolf gestured back toward the higher ground. "Over there. There aren't any trees or gardens or such. We can at least see them coming."

"And when Lepp Gaz gets here?"

Fool Wolf shrugged. "We can always try running—back through the tunnels and out of this valley. Maybe now that we've come here, the compulsion is over with, and we can leave."

"Coward!" Uzhdon declared.

"No," Inah said. "I tried that already. The pain comes back, worse than before."

Fool Wolf nodded. "Very well. Uzhdon and I fight these things off while we wait for Lepp Gaz. Then we'll see."

"Then I'll kill him," Uzhdon promised. He began walking in the direction Fool Wolf indicated, dragging his massive sword behind him.

THEY FENDED OFF three more attacks by the beasts, each more vicious than the last. When Lepp Gaz arrived, Fool Wolf and Uzhdon were smeared with their own blood.

Gaz halted fifty paces away. He was still in the guise of Ilupor, Uzhdon's brother. The two weren't twins, but they looked very much alike, with their fine dark features and reddish hair. Behind Gaz were ten warriors with umber kilts and hawk feathers in their hair. Next to the sorcerer stood a dark, willowy beauty—the princess She'de'ng, from the far-away city of Nhol. It was through her that Fool Wolf first met the sorcerer, when she hired Fool Wolf to assassinate him. Now she wore his soul on her skin, making him effectively immortal. Of course, Fool Wolf knew that particular secret, so he was a bit surprised to see She'de'ng in such an exposed position. If he could manage to destroy the tattoo on her, Gaz would die.

Or would he, in this place?

The bird-headed hound was with them, too, as were the two that had been attacking Fool Wolf and Uzhdon, along with the final beast—the massive, hunch-shouldered one—still as gray as ash.

"Brother? Is that you?" Uzhdon called.

"Don't be an idiot," Fool Wolf said.

"Of course it is me," Gaz said. "Who else would I be? I've come to help you destroy the First Evil, brother."

Uzhdon's lip trembled. "Fool Wolf claims you are a foreign sorcerer."

"Fool Wolf is an honorless liar, as I'm sure you know," Ilupor said. "He pretended to be your friend—our friend—slaughtered the Sipost priesthood and stole the key to the gate into this place."

Uzhdon met the sorcerer's gaze. "What was the name of the dog we had as children?" he asked.

"Uzhdon," Fool Wolf said, "he has all of the knowledge your brother had."

"His name was Klenop, of course, a small black-and-and tan hunting dog."

Uzhdon nodded.

"Uzhdon—" Fool Wolf began.

"You aren't my brother," Uzhdon said, flatly. "That was the name of our dog, but we were just children when we gave it that name, and didn't know better. It's an obscene term, one my brother would no longer speak. You have stolen my brother's memories but have none of his character. I will kill you."

Some of the men behind Gaz looked confused. Others looked as if things made sense for the first time.

"You men are fighting for evil, for a man who would resurrect the First Evil," Uzhdon said. "You are my men. You belong at my side."

One of them, an older man with copious tattoos, knelt in the ash. "We cannot, Opal of Nah. This man we thought your brother has taken our souls. We cannot do what he does not allow." He looked defiantly at the sorcerer. "But we need not obey him, either."

"No you need not," Lepp Gaz said, and with that each of the men dropped limp and lifeless to the ground.

"Now," he said, stepping forward. "It's time to finish this."

Kill him, Chugaachik urged. *Kill him now, or it is the end of us both.*

Lepp Gaz stepped forward, raising his hand.

The dust swirled and then lifted as if in a mighty sandstorm. From across the plain it came, hissing against flesh, blinding him. Fool Wolf shut his eyes tightly. He summoned up the godsight which Chugaachik gave him without him having to invoke her, but it was equally confusing—the air seemed full of the glowing heartstrands that signified life and puissance. After an instant, he could stand no more and relinquished the supernatural vision.

After a time, the wind died, and in its place stood the city of Xotar, or the ghost of Xotar, sculpted of ash. Its towers and monoliths rose like the spires of mountains, and its gate—just behind them—could have admitted a whale such as he and Inah had spied in the waters near her home. Huge terraced pyramids surrounded the vast plaza they all stood on.

Gaz smiled and drew a slim, black blade. He started forward, and so did the two beasts that had been attacking them.

Uzhdon braced himself.

"No," Fool Wolf said. "Not here. Into the city."

"He killed my brother."

"Then you'll want to actually defeat him, rather than die a stupid death," Fool Wolf snapped. "Come on!"

"Listen to him, Uzhdon," Inah said. "He's been right so far."

Uzhdon's lips compressed and then turned down, but he nodded curtly.

Fool Wolf didn't wait another second but turned and ran through the massive gate.

But he turned at Inah's shriek. She had stumbled, and Fool Wolf saw blood on her thigh. The hounds were almost on her, Lepp Gaz and She'de'ng strolling confidently behind. Lepp Gaz was carrying what resembled a blowpipe.

Inah's eyes blazed like green lightning, and she suddenly bounced up, darting forward with incredible speed, charging Lepp Gaz. Just before she hit him, she elongated and became a snake with scintillating green and yellow scales.

She never reached him. The amorphous hound bounded into her and locked its jaws on her torso. She turned and clamped it in her mouth.

The hound took on color, and the snake dissolved. Inah's limp, naked form fell motionless to the ground.

Lepp Gaz laughed.

Uzhdon roared inarticulately, but Fool Wolf gripped his arm.

"We'll avenge her, I promise. But not here!"

Uzhdon stood there, rigid for a moment, and then the two of them ran into the city.

THEY RAN THROUGH HALLS that could have held palaces and plazas the size of towns. They passed gargantuan statues of the god in the hawk mask and strange basins for which Fool wolf could see no purpose at all. And still they ran, until they reached a point where the walls were less substantial, fuzzier.

"Where are we going! We must turn and fight!"

"No!" Fool Wolf puffed out. He didn't have the breath to explain and frankly didn't care, except that he needed the thick-headed warrior. "Keep—go—faster!"

Soon they were running in a dust storm, like the one that precipitated the city and then, finally, they broke into clear air. Fool Wolf dropped to the ground, panting, Uzhdon beside him.

As they watched, the walls built themselves, and the city was finally whole.

"HOW DID YOU KNOW the city hadn't finished forming on this side?"

"I'm all knowing," Fool Wolf told him.

"No, really."

"It was a small guess based on a larger guess," Fool Wolf replied. "I was right about one, so I'm nearly certain I was right about the other."

"I don't understand."

"Nevermind. Let me explain a few things about Lepp Gaz instead."

"You said he was a soul stealer."

"Yes. That sword of his—if he stabs someone with it, it takes his soul and distills it into a black fluid. Lepp Gaz then has the fluid tattooed on him. He can keep the bodies alive that way—after all, a body can't be killed if its soul survives."

"Then my brother is still alive? And Inah?"

"Probably. That's why I was trying not to get you killed. Saving them is better than avenging them, don't you think?"

Uzhdon looked surprised. "That's very kind of you. I—owe you an apology. I thought you were part of this plot to bring back the First Evil. It now seems clear you are not."

Fool Wolf shrugged that off. "Its not important. Here is what is: Lepp Gaz keeps his own soul out of his body, as well. But he also keeps it near him, where he can protect it. Last I knew, his soul was on the body of She'de'ng."

"But she can't die. You just said so."

"True. But if a blade or a spear happens to pass through the tattoo which holds his soul, it will be released."

"Ah! And then he can die."

"Yes."

"But why would he risk her, so, if that's the case?"

"Maybe he's too confident of his own power. Anyway, it doesn't matter. What does matter is that it's our only chance. And you're the one to do it."

"Strike an unarmed woman?"

"You don't have to kill her. I'll explain where the tattoo is. You can use my sword. And remember—she can't die."

"I still don't like it."

"Do you want to save your brother, Inah, and the world from the First Evil?"

"Yes."

"Then you'll have to trust me."

Uzhdon looked skeptical. "I've trusted you before, and paid a dear price."

"Yes, and in Pethvang I not only freed you from a terrible fate, I was repaid for that by being left to suffer the same fate I rescued you from. I'd say we were even."

Uzhdon colored slightly. "I'm not proud of that," he said.

"Exactly. Cutting She'de'ng won't make you proud, either, but it's what you have to do. What was that you said earlier, about personal dishonor being preferable to letting the First Evil walk?"

Uzhdon smiled grimly. "I can hardly deny my own words," he replied. "How do we do this?"

"They'll be looking for us in the city. Hopefully they won't expect us to come in behind them. First, though, we're going to need some of your water."

"I'm thirsty, too."

"Not to drink."

WHEN THEY REENTERED XOTAR, they were the same color as its walls, painted with a mixture of water and ash. They slipped down its silent streets, alert for signs of the enemy.

"Help me find them, Chugaachik."

You will have to summon me to survive.

"Just help me find them."

The walls suddenly vanished, as Fool Wolf's vision nudged into the otherworld. Or, rather, they ceased to be walls, and became instead tapestries of living heartstrands.

The city obscures them.

"At least Gaz suffer from the same handicap," Fool Wolf said.

"Here," Uzhdon said. "Their feet leave faint marks in the ash."

Fool Wolf squinted, and indeed, saw faint scuff marks on the simulacrum of stone.

"Good eyes," he said. "we'll—"

Uzhdon tapped him on the shoulder and pointed. One of the hounds stood only a stone's throw away, staring in their direction. Its nose pricked up.

Hide us from it, Chugaachik.

It's alone, sweet thing. What better chance have we to kill it?

"Hide us from it," he repeated.

I can't.

And I know you can.

Anger boiled in Fool Wolf, not his own. The beast looked

After a time, the wind died, and in its place stood the city of Xotar . . .

up, sniffed again, and continued on into another hall.

The two men followed the trail through half a league of city and into a vast room supported by pillars in the form of twining snakes. Within, Fool Wolf heard the faint echo of voices—She'de'ng and Lepp Gaz speaking.

They crept closer, from pillar to pillar, until they were only a small distance away.

Fool Wolf glanced around his hiding place. Lepp Gaz sat cross-legged on a large cube incised completely around with some sort of angular writing. She'de'ng sat on a slightly lower throne, and the two hounds that had been given color crouched at their feet. Inah lay limply between the beasts, her eyes wide and unseeing, but her breast rising and falling with breath.

"Now?" Uzhdon whispered.

"Wait. Wait until I say."

"I can hear you, you know," Lepp said, in a dreamy voice. "You might as will step out so I can see you, too."

"I don't believe we will," Fool Wolf replied.

"You can both live through this," Lepp Gaz said, reasonably. "There is no need for either of you to die."

Fool Wolf's teeth suddenly hurt and a powerful craving to taste blood swept through him. His heart palpitated with excitement, and for a moment he thought he would faint. Images flashed through his head—a disemboweled Lepp Gaz, Lepp Gaz with no eyelids, Lepp Gaz with the skin of his palms cut off. The smell of urine and cedar.

"No!" Fool Wolf muttered. "Stop it, Chugaachik. Lady She'de'ng! Don't you know how he will use you?"

"Poor Fool Wolf," she replied, in her lilting, aristocratic accent. "You don't know me at all, do you? I know exactly what my portion will be."

"When the First Evil returns, your portion will be only death!" Uzhdon bellowed.

Lepp Gaz laughed. "The First Evil is a children's story you idiots in Nah have been telling yourselves for five thousand years. Don't you know the truth, yet? Are you so dense, Opal of Nah?"

"I was entrusted with Hukop, the guardian. I know the truth! I know what you would resurrect!"

"Hukop lost his mind because of what we did," Lepp Gaz said. "He deluded himself, and then your people. Children."

Fool Wolf noticed a movement from the corner of his eye. It was the skeletal hound, bearing down on him silently, jowls open.

"Now, Uzhdon!" Fool Wolf cried. "Now, Chugaachik!"

And he opened himself to the goddess.

His vision jolted red and green-black, and scent smote him—the stinging alkaline of the ash, Uzhdon's sweat, She'de'ng's faint jasmine perfume, the scratchy musk of Inah. And the hound, the hound filled his vision, and he sank his talons into it gleefully as it cut into him, and he was glad, overjoyed, and with a more than sexual intensity, gratified in a burst of pleasure so powerful it knocked him writhing to the ground. And Chugaachik's laughter, all around him, in him but seeping out, tearing from the throat of a hound now become real.

And then Chugaachik was no longer in Fool Wolf. He was empty of her.

"Finally! Finally!" the beast shrieked, shivering like a heat mirage. "Fool Wolf, my sweet, you have no idea what you have done."

Fool Wolf clambered to his feet. "Wrong," he said. He turned and ran as fast as he could toward the others.

Uzhdon stood over the collapsed form of She'de'ng, waving a bloody sword and turning on Lepp Gaz. Gaz stood, a laugh frozen on his lips, as the final hound filled with the rainbow. Fool Wolf could feel Chugaachik's breath just behind him, as he leapt forward, snatching the black sword from Lepp Gaz's frozen hand. Then claws like glass ripped into his back, and he watched in dull surprise as blood speckled the floor he was tripping toward, a floor which was swirling with color, like the walls, the columns, the roof, as Xotar became real.

But he twisted as he fell, and the point of the sword went through the neck of the newest hound, the hound that was really Lepp Gaz, and its eyes went wide and a terrible howl broke from its throat before it fell back into dust. The pain in Fool Wolf's back vanished almost as swiftly, and he rolled back to his feet. The hound that was Chugaachik stopped short, staring at the point of the weapon with sapphire eyes. Then the hound uncoiled like a snake, rose high and twisted together, and became a woman with ebony skin and eyes of green fire, beautiful, perfect, stunningly desirable.

"Sweet thing," she murmured, in a voice that promised everything. "We've been together for so long. What are you doing?"

"Stopping you," he said.

"Give me that sword, or you'll force me to kill you."

"We'll see about that."

Chugaachik showed a mouthful of white needles. "You actually did me a favor," she said, swaying toward him. "Lepp Gaz might have been the one to choose our incarnation, but now that falls to me. Which means I can give you your every wish, my sweet. You can be our consort." She waved at Uzhdon and the insensible Inah. "We can keep them as pets, if you wish."

"I don't understand!" Uzhdon wailed.

Chugaachik turned her gaze to the warrior. "Pitiful creature. Your precious Hukop is part of us, do you understand? Together we slew our father and thus won our freedom."

"These four," Fool Wolf said. "They are your First Evil."

Chugaachik beamed. "We were among the first, brother to Balati and the Forest Lord. We watched the great gods dream and lose form, decay into many smaller gods, and we swore it would never happen to us. We built a city and took for ourselves a people, and they worshipped us. Their worship held us together for millennia. But our father made us as aspects of himself, and that was his downfall. We plotted, destroyed him, and divided what remained of his power between us. We ruled this place as siblings until they day we too quarreled, and in the following war lost everything. Hukop became deranged, and became what you knew him as—a deluded guardian, afraid of going forward, afraid of going back. Mehas went far away and put his essence in a human vessel to make himself immune from the call, should it ever come. Lepp Gaz wandered as a sorcerer, remembering something of the glory and trying to recapture it. I was most cursed of all, unable to manifest form, doomed to serve pitiful shamans like you. You brought us all back together again Fool Wolf. This is your triumph, and you can share in it. Only release Lepp Gaz from that sword."

"I see no reason to do that," Fool Wolf replied.

"I am fond of you, sweet thing. You have helped us, after

all." She waved at Uzhdon. "He is a fool, with his conceptions of good and evil. You know better. There is only power."

"Indeed," Fool Wolf replied. "Power I hesitate to give you."

Her voice dropped to a purr. "If you don't want to share, then you can be free, as easily as that. You are free of me already. Release Gaz and be on your way."

"I won't do that either."

"Three of us are incarnate. You can't stop us."

"I think I can," Fool Wolf replied. "I'm willing to bet that unless all four of you are incarnate, you not only can't merge back together, you can't even leave this valley without losing your bodies again. You'll be stuck here forever, with no one to torture or murder. Maybe you'll even turn on each other again."

He advanced a step, the sword pointed out at arm's length. "Or we can do this, instead."

Chugaachik narrowed her eyes. "Don't, sweet thing. You won't like the result."

For answer, Full Wolf thrust with all of the speed in his command.

Chugaachik fell to dust before the blade reached her. He felt a sudden wave of sickness as she returned to her home in his heart.

Is this what you wanted?

"It's the only way," he said.

The other hounds tried to run, but they reacted too slowly, and Fool Wolf was full of the strength and speed of the sword. He took them as he had taken Lepp Gaz, as around him Xotar collapsed once more into ash.

INAH'S REMARKABLE EYES filled once again with intelligence. She blinked up at Fool Wolf. Then slowly took in her surroundings.

"Where are we? I don't remember."

"In Nah, in Uzhdon's house. How do you feel?"

"Tired."

"Disappointed?" Fool Wolf asked.

"I don't know what you mean. I remember attacking the sorcerer, and then—" she shook her head. "It's confusing. I wanted something, I remember. Very badly."

Fool Wolf nodded and gripped her hand.

"Did we win?" She asked.

"That depends upon what you mean," Fool Wolf replied. "Lepp Gaz failed, and so did Chugaachik. So did you."

He opened the front of the loose robe Uzhdon had given him. Across his chest was scrolled a black tattoo, a snake twisting back on itself.

"You used Gaz's sword," she said, her voice flat. "That's my soul, isn't it?"

"It is."

"You could have put it on me."

"I don't think so. Lepp Gaz wasn't alone in his aspirations. All of you conspired, didn't you? Chugaachik didn't even know what was happening until she entered the Strictured Land. But you did. You brought me and Uzhdon together. It was never Lepp Gaz summoning us, it was you. Gaz knew what was happening and meant to take advantage of it—but you started it."

Her eyes hardened, a bit. "I wasn't sure what I was doing at first," she said. "When I met you I could feel the possibilities—I could feel the other two, far away." She sighed. "Don't you know what we could have done?"

Fool Wolf laughed. "Why would I care? Chugaachik was a part of it—I wasn't. And you've been known to be—shall I say careless?—with my life."

"We wouldn't have hurt you."

Fool Wolf leaned in and kissed her on the forehead. "I don't trust anyone who even has that decision to make."

"Where are Gaz and Hukop?"

"In the sword, still. It wasn't easy to figure out how to get you out and not them, but I managed it. Even that was a risk I shouldn't have taken, but I did. As for the sword—I suspect no one will see it until the world ends, if even then. Chugaachik, of course, is safe again with me. And, if you're interested, She'de'ng and Uzhdon are both well."

She sat up. "And me? What becomes of me?"

Then the hound uncoiled like a snake, rose high and twisted together . . .

He shrugged. "If Uzhdon ever discovers you knew what you were doing, I suspect one or the other of you will die. Me—well, I have your tattoo on my skin. Without Gaz's sword to extract it, my fate is your fate. You can't kill me without killing yourself, not unless I return to the Strictured Land. Which I won't. I'll die first." He smiled. "And that is that. There's plenty more to do in the world, Inah, then to become what you were five thousand years ago. After all, the four of you failed when you had everything in your grasp. You would have failed again, after a thousand years."

"But you might have shared those thousand years with us."

"Or you might have killed me like a flea."

She sighed. "I thought I liked you," she said.

"Yes, and I do like you. I just can't trust you."

"And so we part now?"

"Well, that's the most interesting question of all. Do I worry for the rest of my life that you're just behind the next rock with some plot to kill me and steal your soul back, or do I keep you in my sight? Which would be safer for me?"

She smiled, a narrow, almost playful smile. "A choice I don't envy you. Which will you do?"

"I don't know. But either way, life will be more interesting."

Mind flayers

MIND BLAST

Ignoring the "THE" in the title, what is the longest name of an D&D or AD&D module that contains only one vowel in the title? (You can use the vowel as often as you want.)

You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 75

no. 21

by Mike Selinker

"So there I was in this bar in Sigil," says your drinking companion, Feargal the All-Noxious. "You know, the City of Doors on the Concordant Opposition, the plane of true neutrality?"

You assure Feargal that yes, you do know.

"Anyhoo, so I'm drinking away when these four guys in dark hats and trench coats take up the table behind me. The barkeep comes over and gives them a round on the house, saying he's always happy when a deva, an eladrin, a devil, and a demon sit down together for a tasty beverage. Me, I'm trying to keep from turning around, because I've never seen a group made of beings who were, respectively, lawful good, chaotic good, lawful evil, and chaotic evil."

Get to the point, you urge Feargal.

"This barkeep, he tells his barmaid to get his friends Aznimul, Barathor, Codexun, and Dave some of the bar's finest blood and ambrosia. She comes over and asks each to explain a few things about himself.

"So Aznimul says, 'I'm lawful good, Barathor's evil, and Codexun's chaotic.' "

"Barathor says, 'I'm lawful good, Codexun's evil, and Dave's chaotic.' "

"Codexun says, 'I'm lawful good, Barathor lied at least once, and Aznimul shares the same good/evil axis as Dave.' "

"And then Dave says, 'Well I'm not lawful good, Aznimul's evil, and Codexun's good.' "

"Well I don't mind telling you that by this point I was hopelessly confused. The barkeep later told me that devas always tell the truth, demons always lie, tieflings tell the truth twice as often as they lie, and devils lie twice as often as they tell the truth. So given that all three of them each made three statements, I should know who was what. At least that's what the barkeep said."

And the barkeep was right. Who was what?

no. 20 SOLUTION

STARTING POSITIONS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A								
B								
C								
D								
E								
F								
G			D		H	A	M	
H	T	S	V	E	N	J	K	L

ENDING POSITIONS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	J							
B			T		H		M	
C	L							
D						A		
E			D					V
F	N				K			
G							E	
H		S		I				

Ember is a queen (clue 9). Jozan reaches her by moving diagonally (clue 6). There is only one queen (clue 2), so she must be a bishop to move diagonally. Ember is in file 7 (clue 9). Ember must be in A7, B7, G7, or H7 to allow Jozan to reach her from rank A (clue 6). Krusk can reach Ember from rank F (clue 7), meaning Ember must be in G7, Krusk in F5, and Jozan in A1. All protect a square in all directions (clue 4).

Krusk can reach Devis (clue 7), as can Tordek (clue 8). By Krusk's logic, Devis is in E3, D4, D6, E7, or H4 (G3, G7, and H6 being protected or occupied). This puts Tordek in file 3, 4, 6, or 7. Mialee is in file 7 (clue 9). Tordek can reach Hennet and then Mialee at least two squares later (clue 8). So Tordek is in file 3, Hennet in file 5, and Devis in square E3 (the only one reachable by Tordek and Krusk).

Tordek must be in A3, B3, or C3. Since he's in the same rank as Mialee, A3 is not possible, as she's a pawn (clue 3). C3 isn't either, since Jozan could reach him there, and Jozan's move to Ember would be blocked (clue 6). So Tordek's in B3, Hennet's in B5, and Mialee's in B7.

Ember's placement means Soveliss must be in H2 (clue 10). Since Soveliss can reach Nebin (clue 10), Nebin must be in F1, as the other options, F3 and G4, are protected.

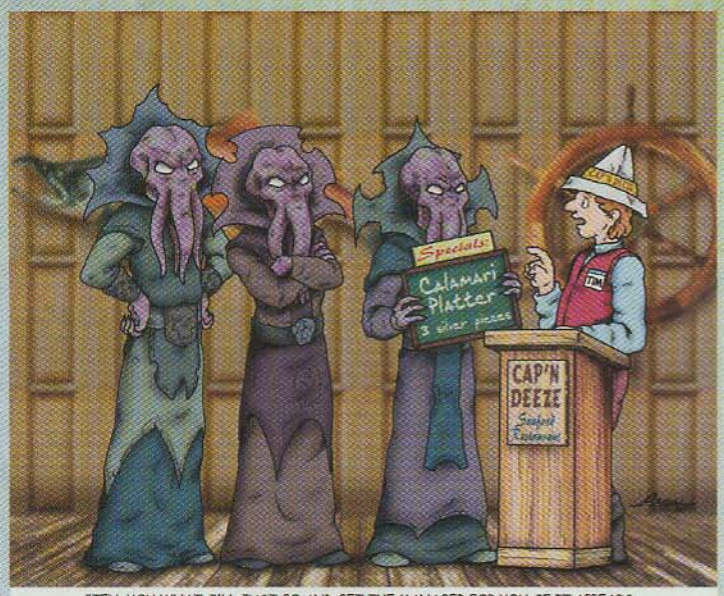
Vadania must be the half-even bishop in clue 11, since others can reach Devis, the other half-elf (clues 7 & 8). The only unprotected squares from which she can reach Hennet (clue 11) are D7 and E8. D7 is out since Ember could reach her in that spot (clue 11), blocking Ember's path to Mialee (clue 9). Vadania's in E8.

Alhandra can be reached by Krusk (clue 7), and the only squares still available are D6 and H4. But she must be a pawn, since all major pieces are accounted for by now. Pawns can't be in rank H (clue 3), so she's at D6.

Lidda is on a wall (clue 5). At 3rd level (clue 1), only Jozan, Hennet, Mialee, Devis, Vadania, and Nebin cast spells. In H4 she can reach Soveliss, and in H5 she can only reach Krusk and Soveliss, so those are out. In C1 and D1 she can reach Nebin and Jozan, and in D1 she can also reach Alhandra. But clue 5 says she can reach exactly two heroes, not three. Lidda must be in C1.

The only unprotected and unoccupied squares left are H4 and H5. The invisible stalker must be in one of those. Were it in H5, no hero could reach its square. But Krusk can if it's in H4, so by clue 12, that's where it must be.

Dragon Mirth



AARON WILLIAMS

"TELL YOU WHAT, I'LL JUST GO AND GET THE MANAGER FOR YOU. IF IT APPEARS THAT I'M RUNNING FOR MY LIFE, REST ASSURED THAT IT'S MERELY A COINCIDENCE."

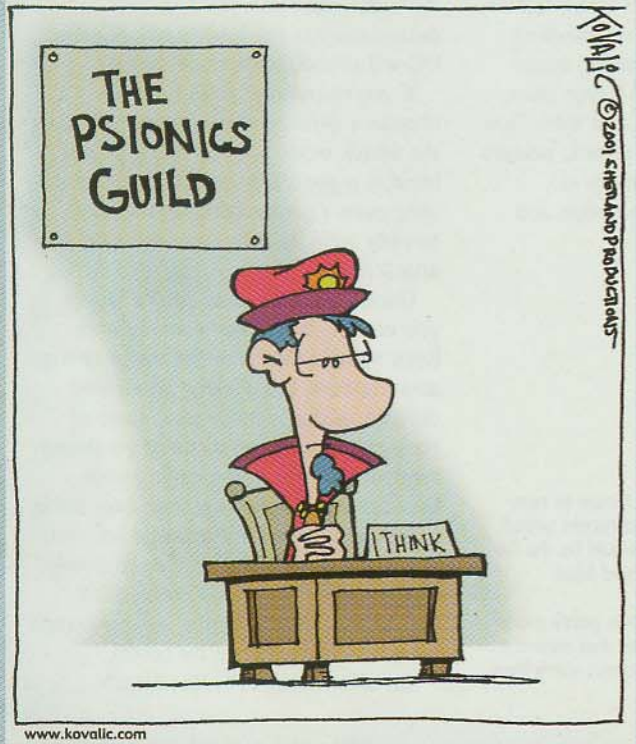
MARC BILGREY

"What kind of quest is this? A dozen eggs, a quart of milk, a container of orange juice and a loaf of white bread?"

GRUNCHELLO by Jerry Seltzer

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT STRANGE INGREDIENTS A MAGIC SPELL MIGHT CALL FOR, SO GRAB ANY UNIQUE ITEMS YOU COME ACROSS.
LIKE WHAT?
WELL, LIKE THIS ROCK. IT'S PINK ON THIS SIDE BUT BLACK ON THE OTHER SIDE. LOOK FOR THINGS LIKE THIS.
HOW ABOUT THIS?
WHAT IS IT?
IT'S THE SEVERED HEAD OF A WOOD GNOME. AND LOOK! HIS HAT COMES OFF!
YOU IDIOT! THAT'S JUST AN ACORN!
HEY, YOU SEARCH FOR YOUR TREASURE, I'LL SEARCH FOR MINE!

THE UNSPEAKABLE OAF by John Kovalic



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"OUR FIRST HALF-ORC! LET'S NAME HER BLUDSTUK, AFTER MY UNHOLY SWORD."

VS PSIONS & PSYCHIC WARRIORS

by David Noonan

Part of the problem with fighting psions and psychic warriors is that you never know exactly what you're facing. A veteran D&D player knows that a wizard in plate mail isn't a serious threat, for example, but a psion can wear full plate and have complete access to an array of mental powers—and her highest ability score might be Strength!

The psychic warrior looks unassuming, but he has nearly as many feats as a fighter and can grow as strong as a bear (worse, he might be able to grow claws, too).

In some respects, fighting psions and psychic warriors is the same as fighting spellcasters. You can disrupt their psionics by closing into melee range, then nailing them with attacks of opportunity as they manifest their powers. Just don't be surprised when the high-Dexterity nomad, high-Strength egoist, or high-Constitution shaper fights better than a wizard.

Psions and psychic warriors are just different enough to give a veteran player pause. Psions come in six flavors (telepaths, seers, shapers, savants, nomads, and egoists), and fighting the fire-slinging savant is quite different from facing the ectoplasmic minions of the shaper.

Preparation

Know your target. One of the hardest parts about fighting psions and psychic warriors is identifying them in the first place. They usually aren't identifiable as such until they start using their powers—and even then you might mistake them for more ordinary spellcasters.

Look for crystals or other weird items that psions and psychic warriors generally carry. Psions in particular use crystals to hold extra psi points, store ready-to-manifest powers (like scrolls), and fire powers right at you (with icicle-shaped crystals called *dorjes*). If it's made of crystal, the owner could be a psion or psychic warrior.

Many other psionic items (like tattoos, skins, and other truly weird gear) can be used by nonpsionic characters. But it had to be made by a psionic character, so it tends to stay within whatever psionic cultures and organizations exist in your campaign world.

Buff that Will save. This is especially important if you're a barbarian, fighter, ranger, or rogue—if you're trundling around in plate armor holding some weird weapon, that mind flayer psion will take one look at you and think "low Will save—yum!" Not all psionic powers provoke Will saves, but many do, including the classic *domination* and *charm* tricks of the telepath. And whether or not you're psionic, all five psionic attacks have to beat a Will save to do damage. So use *potions of Wisdom, protection from chaos/evil/good/law,* and even the lowly *resistance* if you know you're facing psionic opponents.

Have countermeasures and restoratives ready. Even accomplished psion-fighters occasionally have to cry, "Medic!" Nothing passes out the ability score damage like psionic vs. psionic mental combat, so you'll want the *lesser restoration* and *restoration* spells prepared, along with the psionic equivalents: *lesser cell adjustment* and *cell adjustment.*

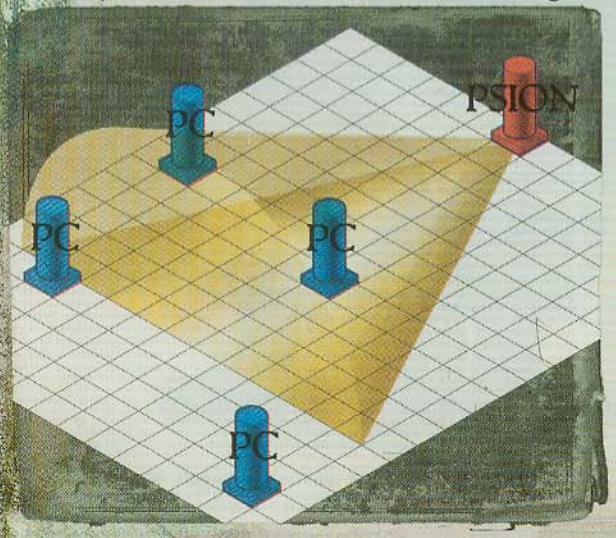
Tactics

Know which psionic attacks are strong—and weak. Psions and psychic warriors have five psionic attack modes they can throw at you, and there are five defenses that a psionic defender can raise. (Nonpsionic defenders just get a will save, but the DC will probably be much lower.)

If you're psionic, you'll have to choose a defense mode without knowing the attack mode you're facing. Empty Mind is a good first choice, because it only costs 1 power point and it's not terribly weak against any particular attack mode.

Once you know what you're facing, you can begin to tailor your defense. Keep in mind that your foe might change attack modes, too. Picking attack and defense modes is a complex game of rock-paper-scissors, so there's a strong random element. If you can't decide between defense modes, your best bet is to look at mental hardness and psi cost. That way, even if you've chosen poorly, the mental hardness will cushion the blow to your ability score, and you won't have wasted too many psi points.

On offense, use Psychic Crush



The biggest threat to nonpsionic adventurers posed by a psion would be the 60' cone of a *mind blast.*

Try to position party members in a way that makes it difficult to target more than one person.

against psionic foes if you can—especially if they're flatfooted. This attack is expensive, but reducing your enemies' Wisdom also hurts their Will saves, which makes your future psionic attacks even easier. But make sure you can afford the 5 psi points—there's nothing worse than running out of points before your opponents do.

If most of your group is nonpsionic, the only psionic attack you really have to fear is *mind blast,* because the Will save for all the other attack modes are -8 or -9 against nonpsionic defenders. It's a cone attack, so spread out so the cone can't get more than one or two of you at a time. Remember, cones are always as wide as they are long, and the enemy psion or psychic warrior will probably move before using Mind Blast.

Dictate the range of the engagement. When possible, face psions up close and personal and psychic warriors at range. Psions provoke attacks of opportunity when they manifest their powers, and there's no reason to pass up a free shot. Be cautious—unlike most wizards, psions might have high Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores. Despite this, they're still not a match for melee-oriented classes.

Psychic warriors don't have access to ranged psionic powers, so they'll definitely be closing on you. Don't let them. Stay mobile yourself with *fly, dimension door,* or a good speed, using ranged weapons and spells to take them out. Alternatively, control the terrain itself with *web* or *entangle.* As a last resort, spread out, forcing an enemy psychic warrior to choose a target.

Maneuvering to set the range of the battle is particularly important if you're worried about direct psionic attacks. With the exception of the *mind blast* (a 60 ft. cone), all psionic attacks are Close range (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels) affairs. This is an exception to the "charge the psion" rule—stay outside of the psion's attack range, and there's only a limited number of psionic powers she'll be able to throw at you.

Your best friend against psychic warriors is *negate psionics.* Psychic warriors rely heavily on an array of powers like *animal affinity, claws of the vampire,* and *inertial barrier* to keep them alive and effective in melee combat. By targeting them with *negate psionics,* you can strip the psychic warrior of many of those powers. Not only does that make the psychic warrior more vulnerable right after you drop *negate psionics,* it'll take time and psi points to bring those powers back.

If possible, target *negate psionics* rather than use it as an area-effect spell—against even a low-level psychic warrior, you'll likely get more than one power negated. Remember, unless your campaign uses the "Psionics Are Different" option outlined in the *Psionics Handbook, dispel magic* works exactly like *negate psionics.*

For example, a typical 6th-level psychic warrior might have *combat prescience, animal affinity, lesser metaphysical weapon, combat precognition,* and maybe even a 0-level power like *burst* or *elfsight* up before a battle begins. The first four powers above combine to give the psychic warrior +1 AC, +3 attack, and +1 damage, plus one ability score (probably Strength or Dexterity) pumped up by 10 points.

That's a lot of oomph, but a 6th-level psion using *negate psionics* has a 50-55 percent chance of dispelling each of those powers with a targeted negation. Best of all, your psychic warrior foe doesn't get a refund on the 8 psi points he spent to manifest those powers.

Sadly, *negate psionics* won't do a thing about the Inertial Armor feat that a lot of psychic warriors have. (Feats simply aren't affected by *negate psionics* or *dispel magic.*)

Take care of your casualties. Nonpsionic characters don't have to worry as much about ability score damage because the pathways of their brains aren't "open" enough for an enemy psion to really hurt them. They'll be stunned for 1 round per ability score that a psionic character would have taken. A nonpsionic group needs to watch their formation in battle so that there's always someone nearby to yank a stunned comrade out of harm's way. Leave no one completely isolated—unless you're trying to avoid the cone of a *mind blast* (see above).

What Doesn't Work

While psions and psychic warriors have some similarities to spellcasters, two good anti-spellcaster tactics tend to fizzle against them.

Grappling spellcasters is terrific. They can't use any spell that has a somatic component or a material one they didn't have in hand when the grapple started. A grappled psion doesn't have those components to worry about, so a successful power manifestation is just a Concentration check away. (You'd think that the ectoplasmic goo that comes with a material display would help with an Escape Artist check, but it doesn't.)

Spellcasters are quickly frustrated by rivals who lob *dispel magic* after *dispel magic* at their spells as they're being cast, but there's no psionic equivalent to counterspelling, so your only chance to disrupt that enemy psion is to deal damage at the moment the psion manifests the power (probably with a held action).

HAVEN'T READ THE PSIONICS HANDBOOK?

HERE'S A QUICK PRIMER:

CLASSES: The Psionics Handbook has two: the psion (master of psionic powers) and the psychic warrior (fights well and uses a limited set of psionic powers to improve combat and movement abilities).

POWERS: Psions and psychic warriors manifest powers rather than cast spells. Manifesting a power is like a spell-like ability, except that there's no spell failure chance for armor. The powers are paid for with psi points (which are replenished each day). Higher-level psions and psychic warriors know more and better powers, and they have more points to spend.

COMBAT: Psions and psychic warriors can also attack their foes directly with their minds, and they use their mental powers to stop similar attacks from their foes. Psionic attacks do ability score damage against psionic foes and stun nonpsionic foes.

MANIFESTATIONS: Psionic powers don't have verbal or somatic components. Instead, they have one or more of five different displays. If a power has a visual display, the psion or psychic warriors eyes turn silver, and rainbow lights flash around the manifester. The auditory display is a deep-pitched hum, and the olfactory display is a hard-to-place "nostalgic" odor. A mental display is the ringing of tiny bells inside your head. Best of all is the material display: the target is covered with a thin layer of translucent, ectoplasmic goo that evaporates after 1 round.

Answer to Mind Blast: TOMB OF HORRORS.

The Adventures of Volo

LOST TREASURES OF CORMYR, PART 4

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by Ron Spencer

Volothamp Geddarm at your service, gentles, setting forth truths of the Realms like one last, glittering handful of gems cast like dice onto a gaming-table, to the gasps of less wealthy gamblers. Yes, this day I write of my last pair of "lost treasure tales" thus far gleaned from the records of the great kingdom of Cormyr.

The Hullack Hawk
In the days when Hullack was independent and Cormyr and Sembia struggled for control of Marsember and what is now eastern Cormyr, the "Hawk" was an outlaw who stole much Sembian gold and retreated into the Hullack Forest, providing Sembia with an excuse to invade Cormyr.

King Pryntaler Obarskyr
(1164 DR–1210 DR)
A hot-blooded, broad-shouldered warrior for much of his life, Pryntaler shrank in his later years into a tall, thin, almost gaunt king of indifferent health. With his illness, he astonished all by setting aside rashness, becoming wise, observant, considerate of others, and a diplomat of accomplished penmanship.

Pryntaler was brave, had piercing blue eyes, close-cut brown hair and beard, and faultless skill at dancing in youth and later age–but only at in his gray years could he have been called "cool-headed."

Eltrym Drauthglas
Lord of Hullack
(1128 DR–1202 DR)
Tall, dignified, gray-bearded, and balding, Eltrym was a widower who lost his four sons fighting Cormyr. To keep his six daughters (eldest to youngest: Jalalla, Theera, Ghaunyl, Ileeyra, Ormarra, and Yolara) from being slain or ravished if the Purple Dragons destroyed Hullack Hall, he surrendered–and Pryntaler allowed him to keep his title and powers.

The two men became friends who met often to play chess, drink wine, and discuss the business of Cormyr and the bright young men and women who'd lead it in the future. Eltrym was a good warrior and hunter before a horse rolled over him in battle, crippling him.

Donder Cormaeril
(1155 DR–1206 DR)
Head of House Cormaeril in his time, Donder was tall, laconic, moustachioed, and a deadly swordsman–quite a dashing figure as he "rode the realm." His hair was brown and his eyes green, and he raised and trained magnificent horses–escaping Jarthoon on one after defying its lord Ongmar. Ongmar had given Donder the choice of declaring against the King, or death; Donder's reply was to draw steel, wound Ongmar as he tumbled the rebel across the room as a shield against the hurled daggers of Ongmar's men, and then leap through a high window to the courtyard below to make his escape.

Althallan Crownsilver
(1157 DR–1212 DR)
Briefly patriarch of the Crownsilvers, Althallan was a small, catlike man with almost feminine good looks (notably, large indigo eyes and magnificent red hair) and a quick wit. Agile in a fight, he had a prodigious capacity for drink, once springing up to fight and slay a would-be assassin after a drinking-bout that left fellow nobles reeling. His favorite weapons were two slim, needle-like longswords–and many hurled tankards!

Chanthar Huntsilver
(1162 DR–1203 DR)
The longtime head of his house, Chanthar was a proud, "difficult" man with a red moustache, hair banished by disease (he always wore a hat and was very sensitive to jests and remarks about hair or baldness), and a flamboyant wardrobe.

Talking with King Pryntaler in camp, he once hurled himself forward to take an assassin's blade, slashing open the man's face so the King had time to draw steel, step in front of his queen (who insisted on traveling with him), and strike the assailant down.

Beldarm Truesilver
(1169 DR–1235 DR)
A burly, broken-nosed, good-natured warrior, possessed of unruly brown hair and a profusion of facial moles and sores, Beldarm spent years struggling to keep his impoverished family in

possession of their ancestral keep. A Sembian agent offered him much gold to betray his king to an assassin (the one Althallan Crownsilver slew), and Beldarm agreed. This was observed by an eavesdropper, Lady Auleethaea Cormaeril, who fled to tell the Queen.

Queen Alvandira grimly mustered armsmen and hastened off in search of Beldarm. In his apartments they found a manservant, who eyed their grim faces and drawn steel and told them his master had gone to the King.

"The King!" Queen Alvandira hissed, and they sprinted to the royal apartments of Helmstar Castle—to find Pryntaler pouring Beldarm a drink.

The noble had just reported all to his king and offered to surrender his sword and enter a dungeon cell, or to play along with the assassin, whichever Pryntaler preferred.

In the general relief, the Queen espied a man slipping away and hurled her dagger at him—but missed. She then announced grimly, "I think we can assume the assassin will know he can't depend on Truesilver aid."

Lady Auleethaea Cormaeril (1176 DR–1264 DR)

A quiet, rather plain, and very observant lady-in-waiting to Queen Alvandira, Auleethaea's diaries are the modern reader's guide to Pryntaler's handling of a tense confrontation with the Lord of Hullack, his avoidance of two assassination attempts sponsored by Sembian interests, and his foiling of an attempted rebellion by the young Ongmar Jarthoon.

Auleethaea had full access to the King and Queen, and she spent much of her time silent, eyes downcast, waiting to scurry and carry out any royal order; she was thus well placed to see everything that befell.

Auleethaea had ash-blonde hair, green eyes, and delicate features and skin—a petite and nicely-gowned noblewoman who saw far more than she appeared to take any interest in, and confided much to her diary.

The Hawk Swoops

Cormyrean scholars make much of the never-seen "Hullack Hawk" as a trumped-up Sembian excuse to invade the Forest Kingdom, but the loss of much wealth (from six pillaged warehouses and two sacked and burned estates—those of the merchant families Estcrar and Palindoemyn—near Daerlun) was very real. Estimates pegged the Hawk's takings from these specific raids at more than 300,000 gold coins, much of it in ready coin and trade-bars.

Just where that wealth lies is still a mystery. Outlaws, beasts, and elves mount swift and deadly strikes at anyone brave enough to mount a concerted search into the depths of Hullack Forest even today.

I, Volo, have delved rather deeper than most writers on this subject.[2] Hints in Auleethaea's writings, supported by other records, suggest that the Hawk might have been Beldarm Truesilver, operating with the aid and under the direction of Donder Cormaeril and Althallan Crownsilver, who had their own private scheme to weaken western Sembian holdings and blame it on the Lord of Hullack rather than Cormyr.

Beldarm was wounded and forced to abandon his takings—which might still lie, unburied but overgrown, somewhere just inside Hullack Forest—by Chanthar Huntsilver, who thought he'd caught a rebel or at least a brigand.

When Chanthar called on Donder and Althallan for aid in "hunting down the Hawk," they managed to lead him astray, allowing Beldarm time to escape. Let me be the first to tell the waiting world that the legend of the Hawk was their invention, spread by rumor as enthusiastically as they knew how.

The Missing Wagon

At the close of the reign of King Dhalmass, Conqueror of Marsember and Scourge of the Stonelands, there were murmurs of unrest among wealthy families he'd punished in Arabel and Marsember. Knives were drawn in darkness to take the life of the brawling, wenching king.

A few Purple Dragons fell as those knives struck in practise; documents and even courtiers went missing. No open strife broke out, for the King seemed to change his mind about many things ere he died,[3] but one crime did befall as the tension built: A Purple Dragon paywagon vanished somewhere on the roads of eastern Cormyr.

King Dhalmass Obarskyr, "the Warrior King" (1186 DR–1227 DR)

The most famous warrior of the Obarskyrs, Dhalmass stood well over six feet tall, broad-shouldered and burly. His ice-blue eyes "snapped" when he was angry, and his voice was a deep roar that carried far over the tumult of battle. His nose was a sharp beak, and his long, flowing hair, longer beard, and bristling eyebrows were light blond, almost white.

Prodigiously strong and fast, Dhalmass spent years riding his borders and scouring the land of brigands, orcs, and other monsters. He once defended Cormyr against the full fury of an orc horde—a host thousands strong—with a force a tenth the size, fighting and riding day and night, moving his men about as swiftly as possible by darting from castle to castle for fresh horses, and riding down orc warbands whenever he could catch them.

Orngrym Cormaeril (1196 DR–1249 DR)

This effete, slim-moustachioed, raven-haired warrior was head of House Cormaeril in his time. A veteran battle-knight with cold green eyes and a lightning-fast blade, Orngrym rode at the King's shoulder in most battles and was known for singing at the height of the fray. He was one of those rare men who truly enjoyed fighting, and his swiftness and skill saved the life of his King many times.

For this Orngrym was made a Duke, though it was made clear to all that the

dukedom would die with him. When it did, Orngrym had enjoyed a long, full, and lusty life, turning after the death of Dhalmass to a "retirement" of hunting and training young knights for the crown.

He once demonstrated the ineffectiveness of a watchpost garrison by attacking them alone and unarmed. Without killing anyone, he won his way through all twenty of them to seize the banner from the top of their watchtower.

Ardagast Falconhand
(1187 DR–1246 DR)
This grim-faced, close-mouthed huntsman was head of the King's Scouts for most of the reign of King Dhalmass (and, yes, was an ancestor of Florin Falconhand of the Knights of Myth Drannor). As tall as his King but far more slender, he had a nose every bit as large and sharp, but he also had a craggy face, glittering blue-black eyes, and pale brown hair that was white at his temples. Ardagast fought with a curved saber and a small arsenal of throwing knives.

Tharim Roaringhorn
(1185 DR–1227 DR)
Head of House Roaringhorn when the wagon went missing, this loud, hearty, burly man had a long, wild mane of brown hair, dark brown eyes, a huge and bristling moustache, and an ever-ready armory of warhammers and axes. Always roaring and laughing, Tharim was an irritation to quieter courtiers, but an inspiration in battle; his spirits never flagged, and he hewed down orcs as a farmer scythes grain.

Elbryn Scatterstars
(1192 DR–1227 DR)
A slim, cultured man who liked falconry, fine wines, and getting rich through shrewd shipping deals, Elbryn headed the Scatterstars as they rose from court service to attain nobility—largely through his smooth service to Dhalmass, who increasingly appreciated Elbryn's discretion and thoughtfulness regarding the treatment of guests and the running of the Palace.

Elbryn had blond hair, a moustache, green eyes, a fine-boned face, and a seemingly endless and quietly elegant wardrobe.

Nelnar Orthwood
(1191 DR–1227 DR)
This soft-spoken noble was head of a rising noble family until its power was smashed by his death—he was stabbed by a son, Nars, whose treachery against the throne Nelnar had just discovered. The Orthwoods were then heavily in debt, and the Crown seized their holdings to pay off their creditors, stripping them of noble status but providing Nelnar's widow Freeyel and daughters Taeronissa and Imroserel with a house of their own on royal estates east of the Starwater, and modest annual funds to live on.

Nelnar had flowing brown hair (which he wore as long as many a maid's), was clean-shaven, and had pale blue eyes. He was usually seen smiling absently and quaffing sherry from a belt flask.

Bardanther Uleeyon
(1177 DR–?)
A grizzled ex-warrior who'd turned to magic in later life and was gifted in its use, Bardanther's worldly experience and shrewdness made him a war wizard more capable than most. He soon became a "special agent," dealing with the most puzzling and delicate situations the realm handed its rulers.

Bardanther was a short, weather-beaten man given to plain dress and carrying a concealed knife at all times. He often "shepherded" novice war wizards through duties they found difficult and distasteful (evaluating them as he did so).

Bardanther himself was tempted by offers of great wealth, a chance to gain great magical power, and the pleasures of the flesh in tests covertly arranged by war wizard superiors—and every time proved his loyalty to law, king, and country.

Waevor's Wagon
The pay-wagon that went missing was commanded by Thandor Waevor, a Purple Dragon lancelord, but violent illness (possibly caused by a poison or spell covertly administered to him) caused him to send it on without him—under its usual guard of seven warriors and two war wizards (one a novice and the other a capable, loyal veteran).

Somewhere north of Marsember, the wagon vanished—horses, guards, its cargo of some sixty thousand silver pieces, and all.

The senior war wizard who disappeared with it, Bardanther Uleeyon, was wearing a Purple Dragon ring (a token that allows a wearer access to the monarch, or as if holding senior royal rank) at the time. In those days such items could not be readily traced by war wizards' spells—and this is one of only three (it's thought) such rings whose whereabouts are now unknown.

Ere it vanished, the wagon was encountered on the roads—thundering along after dark with no lamps lit and no outriders—by encamped riders on an escort mission for the Crown to greet and conduct a Sembian trade envoy safely to a meeting in Immersea.

The wagon was heard and seen by no less than the nobles Orngrym Cormaeril, Nelnar Orthwood, Tharim Roaringhorn, and Elbryn Scatterstars; it actually struck and hurled aside the latter two. Orngrym took to horse and went roaring off after the wagon, and Nelnar sent a huntsman in camp, Ardagast Falconhand, to also take up the chase. Orngrym soon lost all trace of the wagon, but the huntsman took a different trail, and caught up with what he believes was the wagon, racing along in the dark. He got close enough to reach for its rear rail—only to be hurled off his horse by a spear suddenly thrust out of the rear window-flap of the conveyance; it would have spitted him had he not been wearing a belt-of-plates under his leathers.

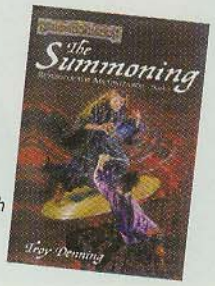
No trace of the wagon was ever found, and the fate of its guards and cargo remains a mystery to this day.

Elminster's Footnotes

1. And last, know ye, for some time to come—if Volo's precipitous flight from the Royal Court at Suzail is any indication. His efforts at good behavior grow no greater—nor more successful. Only his luck at staying alive outstrips the folly of his wayward ways. Theft and vandalism of royal records, indeed. 'Tis also wisest not to grope furious court librarians, no matter how enticing their forms and garb might be. I would ne'er do such a thing. Ahem.
2. As usual (sigh).
3. Readers of Chapter 26 of *Cormyr: A Novel* (Ed Greenwood and Jeff Grubb, TSR, 1996) know why.

HEROES OF The Summoning

BY TROY DENNING · ILLUSTRATED BY GLENN HARRINGTON



Available this month

Evereska: jewel of the mountains, forbidden city of the elves, Lasthaven to all Tel'Quess on Faerûn. Founded in the dark days following the Fifth Crown War, for ninety-nine centuries it has stood as a reminder of all that was noble and beautiful in the once-mighty civilization of the elves—and as a beacon for the greatness to return. It has witnessed the rise and fall of the dwarven empires, the folly that was Netheril, the spread of the human scourge, and still it remains visited by few, conquered by none.

When a patrol of Evereskan Tomb Guards happens across an opened crypt in the isolated foothills east of their hidden city, they expect to discover the usual band of filthy human grave-robbers looting the treasures of their forebears. Instead, the elves find themselves caught between a strange race of magic-wielding worm-creatures and a swarthy company of human warriors so mighty they keep beholders as servants. In the confused battle that follows, one of Toril's oldest banes is unleashed—a race so ancient and evil that even the High Magi rarely speak its name.

If Evereska is to survive, the elves must seek the aid of the very crypt-breakers they hold responsible for freeing the phaerimm. Such help will not be easy to ask. Established as a secret refuge against the irresistible tide of human incursion, the hidden city is the last elven bastion on Faerûn, the final living remnant of the great civilization that once covered so much of the continent. To the proud nobles and mighty High Mages of the ancient citadel, humans are the most dangerous of the civilized races, querulous and libidinous and selfish, always hungry for power and greedy for wealth. It is only with the greatest reluctance that they have opened the gates of Evereska to humankind at all, and only then to those few they deem worthy of the title "elf-friend."

Melegaunt Tanthul is hardly one to inspire such trust. As arrogant as any sun elf and as mysterious as the smile behind a Bedine veil, he wields a dark magic known only to himself, a magic of power and mystery, of danger and temptation—a magic all too human. Having spent the last hundred years spying on the phaerimm beneath Anauroch, he also happens to be Evereska's only hope of salvation.

Unfortunately for the city, only Galaeron Nihmedu understands this. The ne'er-do-well who loosed the phaerimm on Evereska in the first place, Galaeron is a handsome young sorcerer whose inborn feel for magic has always proven more of a drawback than an advantage in Evereska's tradition-bound atmosphere. If the Lasthaven is to endure—if Toril itself is escape the ravages of the phaerimm—he must find the courage to pursue his own kind of magic, to walk the narrow fringe between shadow and light.

WAHOO!* EVERESKAN ARMOR

The workmanship of *Evereskan armor* negates all the disadvantages of wearing armor. The wearer moves normally, applies his full Dexterity bonus to AC, is not required to make Arcane Spell Failure checks, and suffers no Armor Check penalty. Galaeron has a suit of *Evereskan chain mail*, while Takari wears a suit of *Evereskan leather armor*.

Each suit of *Evereskan armor* is tailored specifically to an individual. For any other wearer, the armor functions only as a suit of masterwork armor of its type. Making such a suit of armor takes months of intensive work and requires the wearer for whom it is tailored for to be present for much of that time. The master craftsmen who make *Evereskan armor* never go to such lengths for non-elves and command an astonishingly high price for their work.

*This item is ***not*** balanced for your protection.

Galaeron Nihmedu

Male Elf, 7th-level Fighter, 8th-level Sorcerer

Strength	15 (+2)	Fort. Save	+9
Dexterity	17 (+3)	Ref. Save	+7
Constitution	14 (+2)	Will Save	+10
Intelligence	15 (+2)	Alignment	CG
Wisdom	14 (+2)	Speed	30 ft.*
Charisma	19 (+4)	Size	M (5′7″)
Armor Class	18*	Melee Attack	+13/+8/+3
Hit Points	95	Ranged Attack	+14/+9/+4

Skills: Alchemy +8, Climb +8, Concentration +8, Craft (weaponsmithing) +5, Handle Animal +7, Hide +6, Jump +6, Move Silently +6, Ride +7, Spellcraft +14, Swim +6, Use Rope +5, Wilderness Lore +6.

Feats: Blind-fight, Dodge, Combat Reflexes, Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Improved Critical (longsword), Maximize Spell, Mounted Combat, Silent Spell.

Languages: Common, Elven, Goblin, Sylvan.

Possessions: *Evereskan chainmail, +3 longsword bane against undead and humans, rope of immutable binding,* five *sleep arrows,* five *death arrows, cloak of elvenkind.*

Spells: 6/7/7/6/4, from the following list: 0-level: *arcane mark, dancing lights, daze, detect magic, disrupt undead, light, mage hand, read magic;* 1st-level: *charm person, detect undead, magic missile, message, sleep;* 2nd-level: *invisibility, levitate, web; 3rd level: fly, lightning bolt;* 4th level: *dimension door.*

Appearance: Tall for a moon elf, Galaeron is nearly as large as many humans. He has a handsome, weatherbeaten face and a solid frame. Like the cloak that covers his chainmail, his ready smile and warm eyes conceal a harder temperament beneath.

Background: The eldest child of Lord Aubric Nihmedu of Evereska and Lady Morgwais Nightmeadow of Rheitheillaethor, Galaeron was born into a family more noble in name than power. A former bladesinger and renowned hero, his father teaches the sword arts at Evereska's College of Arms and Magic—and secretly serves as the blademajor of the city's noble militia, the Swords of Evereska. His mother is queen of the wood elves of the High Forest—in so much as wood elves have such things. Morgwais fell in love with Aubric during a war against the High Forest orcs and followed him back to Evereska. Over the course of sixty years, she bore him two moon elf children, Galaeron and his sister, Keya. When a third child—this time a wood elf—died in infancy, Morgwais's heart was broken. After much soul-searching, she concluded that the child's death was caused by her own unhappiness and returned to the High Forest.

Not long after, Galaeron's talent as a sorcerer began to manifest. At first, his father believed the nocturnal levitations and unforeseen telekinesis to be spontaneous outpouring of grief. When the outpouring began to include pyrotechnics, Aubric sought the advice of a wizardly colleague who recognized Galaeron's potential and quickly enrolled him in the Academy of Magic.

Unfortunately, Galaeron's grasp of magic was more instinctual than intellectual. He suffered an endless stream of reprimands for doing things "strangely" and was finally dismissed for refusing to keep a spellbook. Aubric arranged for Galaeron to transfer to the Academy of Arms, where he proved as adept with a blade as with magic and earned a top rank. Unfortunately, his experiences in the Academy of Magic had also instilled in him a conspicuous resentment of authority. He was assigned to the Tomb Guard, where such independent spirits were considered beneficial, and sent to guard the Desert Border South.

Roleplaying Notes: Like most Evereskan elves, Galaeron is suspicious of humans and resentful of their encroachment onto elven lands. This attitude has been hardened over the last two decades by his dealings with human grave-robbers.

WAHOO!* DEATH ARROW

This potent magic item works like a *slaying arrow* that is keyed to whatever type of creature the arrow strikes.

Caster Level: 18th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, heightened *finger of death; Market Price:* 9,650 gp; *Cost to Create:* 4,825 gp + 386 XP.

ROPE OF IMMUTABLE BINDING

This deceptively normal-looking rope is a powerful tool for binding prisoners. A creature bound in it can escape with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 30). Breaking the rope when it binds a creature requires a successful Strength check (DC 30). The rope has AC 20, 12 hit points, and a hardness of 10. If the bound creature attempts to cut, break, or escape the rope and fails, the rope constricts dealing 1d4 points of subdual damage. Other creatures can untie, attack, or attempt to break the rope without causing it to constrict. If a *rope of immutable binding* is broken or severed, it is destroyed.

Caster Level:, 8th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *animate rope; Market Price:* 18,000 gp; *Cost to Create:* 9,000 gp + 720 XP.

*This crazy-powerful item is sure to imbalance your campaign.

Melegaunt Tanthul

Male Human, 20th-Level Diviner

Strength	11 (+0)	Fort. Save	+8
Dexterity	15 (+2)	Ref. Save	+8
Constitution	14 (+2)	Will Save	+14
Intelligence	21 (+5)	Alignment	N
Wisdom	15 (+2)	Speed	30 ft.
Charisma	15 (+2)	Size	M (5′10″)
Armor Class	12	Melee Attack	+10/+5
Hit Points	89	Ranged Attack	+12/+7

Special: Casts spells normally in Wild Magic and Dead Magic areas. Natural darkvision (60 ft.). Divination specialist; Evocation spells prohibited. Has Shadow Weave Magic and Insidious Magic feats for free.

Skills: Alchemy +15, Concentration +18, Gather Information +7, Hide +7, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (arcana) +28, Knowledge (the planes) +28, Knowledge (religion) +10, Move Silently +7, Ride +7, Scry +20, Search +15, Spellcraft +20.

Feats: Brew Potion, Cloaked Shadow Weave Magic, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Heighten Spell, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Shadow Weave Magic, Silent Spell, Spell Mastery (*shield, web, fly, invisibility sphere, shadow walk*), Still Spell.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elven, Infernal, Undercommon.

Possessions: Melegaunt carries little more than a spellbook, spell components, and food and water. He is armed with a Weave-slicing *dark dagger*.

Spells: 4/7/6/6/6/6/5/5/5/5. Typically: 0-level: *arcane mark, daze, detect magic, detect poison, read magic;* 1st-level: *cause fear, comprehend languages, mage armor, obscuring mist, shield, sleep, ventriloquism;* 2nd-level: *invisibility, levitate, minor image, obscure object, see invisibility, web;* 3rd-level: *clairaudience/clairvoyance,, dispel magic, fly, haste, invisibility sphere, major image;* 4th-level: *dimensional door, Evard's black tentacles, improved invisibility, minor creation, scrying, shadow conjuration;* 5th-level: *contact other plane, greater shadow conjuration, major creation, nightmare, prying eyes, shadow evocation;* 6th-level: *disintegrate, greater dispelling, shades, true seeing, greater shadow evocation;* 7th-level: *finger of death, greater scrying, mass invisibility, shadow walk, simulacrum;* 8th-level: *discern location, iron body, maze, power word blind, screen;* 9th-level: *foresight, gate, power word kill, time stop, wish.*

Additional spells: Melegaunt's spellbook contains a host of additional shadow-related spells, including these from the FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting: 1st-level: *cloak of dark power, net of shadows;* 2nd-level: *claws of darkness, shadow mask, shadow spray;* 3rd-level: *blacklight*; 4th-level: *armor of darkness, shadow well.*

Appearance: With dark hair and a darker beard, Melegaunt is a wizard of stocky build and swarthy complexion. He customarily dresses in a black wizard's robe but seems swaddled in shadows even when wearing nothing at all.

Background: Known in his city as the Thirteenth Prince, Melegaunt Tanthul is a wizard of great power and mysterious purpose. After arriving on Toril nearly 150 years ago, Melegaunt spent decades studying the world, wandering from Kara Tur to Chult and Halruaa to Hartsvale before entering the wild lands of Vaasa. There he met a chieftain named Bodvar the Black, offering to arm Bodvar's best warriors with twenty swords that would cleave any armor and build the warlord an impregnable tower of black granite. In return, Bodvar agreed to send the clan's twenty best warriors when the wizard requested their services sometime in the future.

Melegaunt fulfilled his part of the bargain in less than a year, then entered Anauroch alone. He spent the next century spying on the phaerimm, mapping the Underdark beneath the great desert. That they did not suspect his presence for the first seventy-five years is a testimony to the furtiveness of his magic; that he survived the next twenty-five is evidence of its power. When he had learned all he needed, Melegaunt used his magic to call in Bodvar's debt and instructed the clan to send its twenty best warriors to meet him beneath a crypt in the foothills of the Sharaedim mountains. Only he knows whether the calamity that followed was by accident or design.

Roleplaying Notes: As committed to his purpose as he is to keeping that purpose secret, Melegaunt is not by nature evil or cruel. He is as honorable as circumstances permit and does not lightly betray anyone in his service.

MELEGAUNT'S DARK DAGGER

This *+5 dagger* is a minor artifact that ignores Weave-based magical armor bonuses and magic armor enhancement bonuses. (Thus *+3 chainmail* would provide just the armor bonus of nonmagical chainmail and the *mage armor* spell would provide no protection at all.) Creatures other than Melegaunt that attempt to hold the dagger suffer 1d4 cold damage each round.

Caster Level: 17th

Takari Moonsnow

Female Elf, 8th-Level Ranger/4th-Level Diviner

Strength	12 (+1)	Fort. Save	+8
Dexterity	18 (+4)	Ref. Save	+7
Constitution	12 (+1)	Will Save	+9
Intelligence	12 (+1)	Alignment	CG
Wisdom	16 (+3)	Speed	30 ft.
Charisma	17 (+3)	Size	M (4′11″)
Armor Class	16	Melee Attack	+11/+6
Hit Points	73	Ranged Attack	+14/+9

Special: +2 against humans (1st favored enemy), +1 against undead (2nd favored enemy). Divination specialist; Abjuration spells prohibited.

Skills: Animal Empathy +12, Balance +5, Climb +11, Concentration +5, Hide +9, Intuit Direction +8, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +10, Move Silently +12, Spellcraft +4, Use Rope +9, Wilderness Lore +8.

Feats: Endurance, Great Fortitude, Run, Scribe Scroll, Spell Penetration, Track, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Languages: Common, Elven, Sylvan.

Possessions: *Evereskan leather, +2 longsword bane against undead and humans, rope of immutable binding,* five *sleep arrows,* five *death arrows, cloak of elvenkind.*

Ranger Spells 2/1: 1st-level: *pass without trace, speak with animals*; 2nd-level: *cure light wounds.*

Wizard Spells 4+1/4+1/2+1: 0-level: *detect magic, detect poison, disrupt undead, light, open/close*; 1st-level: *charm person, detect secret doors, detect undead, mage armor, spider climb*; 2nd-level: *darkvision, invisibility, see invisibility.*

Appearance: A beautiful wood elf whose youthful face betrays no sign of the two decades she has spent patrolling the Desert Border South, Takari Moonsnow is so small and lithe that humans often mistake her for an elven child. With a cupid's bow smile and doe-brown eyes, she looks far less dangerous than she is.

Background: A native of Rheitheillaethor, Takari Moonsnow grew up wandering the High Forest with her brothers and sisters in the summer, then gathering in the village for the companionship of the rest of the tribe during the winter. It never occurred to her that she might want to live any other way until she met Galaeron when the Nihmedu family came to visit Morgwais. They struck up an immediate friendship that quickly began to develop into a true and deep love.

When Galaeron realized what was happening, he pulled away. At first, Takari took his reticence for some strange city-elf game, for she could feel in her heart that they shared a spirit-deep bond. She finally realized that his reluctance was sincere when Morgwais explained how hard it had been for her to leave Evereska, and how her departure had saddened her family.

Never one to back away from a challenge, Takari took this to mean there was only one obstacle to overcome before Galaeron was hers. She redoubled her efforts to break down his resistance, trying to convince him his fears were unjustified ("silly as bugbear in a fur hat" was how she put it), then claiming that he and she would learn from his parents' example, and finally proposing a temporary relationship of thirty or forty years to see how things went.

Galaeron responded by departing Rheitheillaethor without so much as a "light laughter and sweet wine." Takari knew she was making progress—why else would he have been afraid to say goodbye? Recalling that he was about to start his new duties with the Tomb Guard, she prevailed upon Morgwais to arrange her assignment to his patrol as a scout. She is certain that a few decades serving at his side will convince him that she is no flighty wood elf who will abandon him at the first hint of boredom.

Roleplaying Notes: Always joyous and playful, Takari is nonetheless a determined and clever foe who has been known to flirt with her enemies even as she cuts them open. Like most elves of the High Forest, Takari has a deep mistrust of humans (Elminster and a few others excepted) and will avoid mingling with them even after they have proven their value and trustworthiness.

Vala Thorsdotter

Female Human, 12th-Level Fighter

Strength	15 (+2)	Fort. Save	+11
Dexterity	17 (+3)	Ref. Save	+7
Constitution	17 (+3)	Will Save	+5
Intelligence	12 (+1)	Alignment	NG
Wisdom	12 (+1)	Speed	20 ft.
Charisma	16 (+3)	Size	M (5′8″)
Armor Class	17	Melee Attack	+14/+9/+4
Hit Points	110	Ranged Attack	+15/+10/+5

Skills: Climb +10, Handle Animal +11, Jump +10, Move Silently +7, Ride +16, Swim +9, Wilderness Lore +5.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Endurance, Improved Critical (longsword), Leadership, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: Black scale mail, *darksword,* dagger, composite shortbow and 30 arrows, black horse, black cloak, food and water, flint and tinder, bedroll, captive beholder.

Appearance: Vala is a powerfully built Vaasan with honey-colored hair and green eyes. A woman of many moods, she can appear stern, rambunctious, lusty, and dangerous—sometimes all at once.

Background: Vala is the great-granddaughter of Bodvar the Black, with whom Melegaunt struck his original bargain. Thanks to the Granite Keep and the twenty *darkswords* the mysterious wizard gave to her forebear, her people have lived in safety—or what passes for safety in Vaasa—for over a hundred years. When Melegaunt sent word that he wanted twenty warriors to meet him beneath a certain crypt outside Evereska, Vala did not hesitate to take up her ailing father's *darksword.* Leaving her young son behind with his grandparents (the father was not her life mate), she gathered the rest of the escort, captured a beholder to help with the necessary excavations, and set off across Faerûn.

A practical woman who has spent her life defending her homelands against the many dangers of Vaasa, Vala regards the luxuries and wonders of the Heartlands in much the same way she would the treasure of a white dragon: a temptation embraced only by those destined to become meals. The sole exception to this is Evereska, which she thinks must be the equal of Selûne's Palace of the Moon. It seems only fitting to her that the city should be the home of Galaeron Nihmedu, who, much to the alarm of Takari Moonsnow, is becoming a steady target for Vala's roving eye.

Though Vala misses her young son terribly, she seldom mentions this to Melegaunt. After the gifts the wizard provided her family, it would be the worst sort of ingratitude to complain because her ancestor's promise has taken her so far away. Instead, she is determined to perform her duty completely and loyally, so that when she finally returns to Keep Bodvar, it will be in both peace and honor.

Roleplaying Notes: As skilled with a sword as she is comely, Vala is hardened war leader equally at home commanding men or leering at them. Like her father and grandfather, she prizes honor above all and always keeps her word. She also knows the value of a good trick and will not hesitate to use one in a fight.

VALA'S DARKSWORD

Melegaunt Tanthul presented Bodvar the Black with twenty longswords of black glass as hard as steel, all perfectly molded, with shimmering black hilts and shadow-smooth blades that never need sharpening. *Vala's darksword* is one such weapon. It is a minor artifact.

This *+5 longsword* ignores Weave-based magical armor bonuses and magic armor enhancement bonuses. (Thus *+3 chainmail* would provide just the armor bonus of non-magical chainmail and the *mage armor* spell would provide no protection at all.) Anyone wielding it gains darkvision (60 ft.). Although all *darkswords* are identical in appearance, each is passed down through a particular family and causes 1d4 points of cold damage per round to anyone not of that family who holds the weapon (Melegaunt excepted). As long as both are on the same plane, Vala can command her *darksword* to *fly* to her (as the *fly* spell). Vala must concentrate to keep the sword *flying* to her and thus cannot perform other acts that require concentration (such as moving silently or casting spells). If she is damaged while calling her sword to her, she must succeed at a Concentration check (DC 10 + the damage). Each *darksword* acquires personality foibles from its family; Vala's can show her what is happening in the Granite Tower's bedchambers at night through *clairvoyance.* Other *darkswords* hum in battle, murmur at night, or lose their color if they are not plunged into a vat of mead daily.

Caster Level: 20th.

CLASS ACTS

PSI-HUNTER

by Monte Cook · illustrated by Tom Gianni

Psi-hunters are individuals well-versed in the arcane arts who provide a service for those troubled by beings with psionic powers. These mysterious characters hunt down such beings and neutralize them, either by killing the creatures or capturing them. They are skilled combatants and spellcasters, but all their skills are honed with the destruction of psionic beings in mind.

Psi-hunters are most often fighters or rangers with a level or two of sorcerer (or wizard), but often bards or single-classed sorcerers and wizards take up the task of hunting psionic creatures. Rogues also make good psi-hunters.

NPC psi-hunters are often loners, or they work with a small group of other capable individuals all dedicated to fighting psionics. Occasionally they work in small, tight-knit hunting parties made up of nothing but psi-hunters. Woe to the psion who faces such a group.

Psi-hunters require the *Psionics Handbook* to use.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The psi-hunter is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all types of armor, and with shields.

Spells per Day: Beginning at 1st level, a psi-hunter gains the ability to cast a small number of arcane spells. To cast a spell, the psi-hunter must have an Intelligence score of at least 10 + the spell's level, so a psi-hunter with an Intelligence of 10 or lower cannot cast these spells. Psi-hunter bonus spells are based on Intelligence, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + the psi-hunter's Intelligence modifier (if any). When the psi-hunter gets "0" spells of a given level, such as 0 2nd-level spells at 1st level, the psi-hunter gets only bonus spells. A psi-hunter without a bonus spell for that level cannot yet cast a spell of that level. The psi-hunter's spell list appears below. A psi-hunter learns, prepares, and casts spells just as a wizard does, but only from the psi-hunter spell list.

Detect Psionics: At will, a psi-hunter can detect psionics as the power of the same name. This is a spell-like ability.

Mental Defense: When any psionic attack mode is used against the 1st-level psi-hunter, he is considered to have 1 point of mental hardness and gains a +1 luck bonus to Will saving throws made against any psionic attack or power (including psionic items). At 3rd level, this defense improves so that the mental hardness increases to 2 points and the Will saving throw bonus becomes +2. At 6th level, the mental hardness increases to 3 points, and the Will saving throw bonus is +3. At 9th level the mental hardness is 4 points, and the Will save

THE PSI-HUNTER — HIT DIE D8

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells Known 1	2	3	4	5
1	+1	+0	+0	+2	*Detect Psionics*, Mental Defense 1	1	0	-	-	-
2	+2	+0	+0	+3	*Hamper Psionics*	2	1	-	-	-
3	+3	+1	+1	+3	Mental Defense 2	3	2	0	-	-
4	+4	+1	+1	+4	Psychic Stab	3	3	1	-	-
5	+5	+1	+1	+4	Invisible to Psionics	4	3	2	0	-
6	+6	+2	+2	+5	Mental Defense 3	4	4	2	1	-
7	+7	+2	+2	+5	Power Resistance, Hamper Psionics	4	4	3	2	0
8	+8	+2	+2	+6	*Null Psionics Prison*	4	4	4	2	1
9	+9	+3	+3	+6	Mental Defense 4	4	4	4	3	2
10	+10	+3	+3	+7	Mete Out Mental Justice	4	4	4	4	3

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a psi-hunter, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +5
Knowledge (psionics) Ranks: 3
Feats: Track, Iron Will
Spellcasting: Must be able to cast arcane spells

bonus is +4. Note that the mental hardness gained from this ability does not stack with mental hardness from another source (such as from a psionic defense). This is a supernatural ability.

Hamper Psionics: At 2nd level, the psi-hunter generates psychic static around him at all times. Anyone attempting to use a psionic power within 30 feet of the psi-hunter does so as though in the area of a *catapsi* field. When the psi-hunter reaches 7th level, the area of this power increases to 50 feet, and the effect triples the amount of power points required to manifest a psionic power. This is a spell-like ability.

Psychic Stab: At 4th level, once per day, the psi-hunter can alter one melee attack so that it is particularly potent against psionic characters or creatures. This strike is made at a +4 attack bonus and a damage bonus equal to the class level of the psi-hunter. If the psi-hunter accidentally stabs a creature that is not psionic, the stab has no effect but it is still depleted for that day. This is a supernatural ability.

Invisible to Psionics: At 5th level, the psi-hunter can no longer be detected or sensed by psionic powers, feats, or items. This is a supernatural ability ability.

Power Resistance: At 7th level, the psi-hunter gains a special PR of 10 + psi-hunter class levels. This ability functions only against psionic powers, feats, and items. This is a supernatural ability.

Null Psionics Prison: Once per day, as a spell-like ability, the 8th-level psi-hunter can create a 5-foot radius area in which psionics do not function (as if under the affects of a null psionics field). The prison can be created only around a psionic creature. This prison is immobile and lasts as long as the psionic creature remains within the 5-foot-radius area.

Mete Out Mental Justice: At 10th level, the psi-hunter can place a powerful curse upon any psionic creature he touches. If the psi-hunter succeeds at a melee touch attack, the creature touched must make a Will saving throw (DC 20). Failure indicates that the creature takes 2d6 points of damage each time he uses a psionic power, ability, attack mode, or defense mode. A *remove curse, limited wish, miracle,* or *wish* spell can remove the curse. This supernatural ability can be used a number of times equal to the character's psi-hunter levels.

CLASS SKILLS

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

The psi-hunter's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Climb (Str)
Craft (Int)
Intimidate (Cha)
Jump (Str)
Knowledge (psionics) (Int)
Profession (Wis)
Search (Int)
Spellcraft (Int)
Spot (Wis)
Wilderness Lore (Wis)

Psi-Hunter Spell List

Psi-hunters may choose their spells from the following list:

1st level: *alarm, cause fear, command, doom, hypnotism, magic weapon, obscuring mist, true strike, shield*

2nd level: *blur, bull's strength, cat's grace, detect thoughts, endurance, hypnotic pattern, locate object, see invisibility*

3rd level: *dispel magic*, freedom of movement, greater magic weapon, hold person, minor globe of invulnerability*, nondetection, spell immunity**

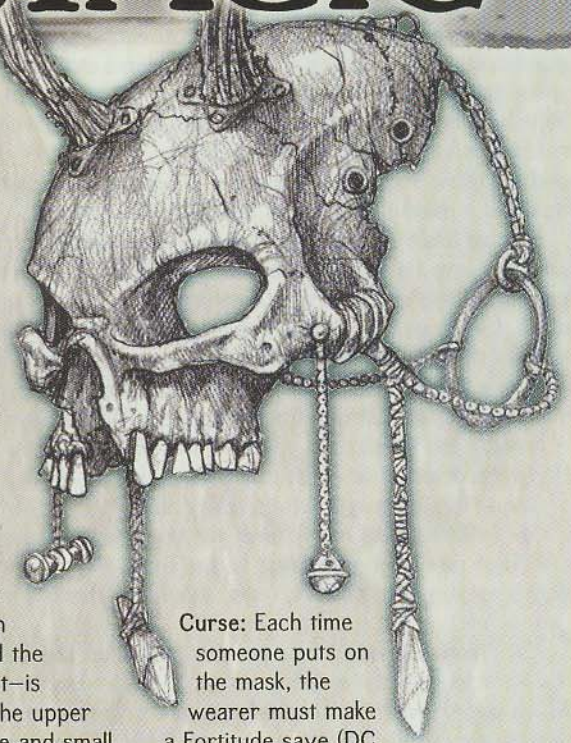
4th level: *emotion, detect scrying*, dimensional anchor, discern lies, haste, locate creature, scrying*

5th level: *anti-magic field, globe of invulnerability*, magic jar, mind fog, Rary's telepathic bond, true seeing*

*Regardless of how psionics and magic interrelate in the campaign, these abilities work against both magic and psionics.

IMASKARCANA: FACES of MAGIC

BY ROBERT SULLIVAN
ILLUSTRATED BY ARNIE SWEKEL



Ages ago, a group of arch-wizards of the Imaskari empire formed an alliance known as the Cabal of Madness. In pursuit of unlimited power, they struck a bargain with horrors from beyond their world, who taught them to make powerful magic masks that they called the Faces of Madness, or Imaskarcana. After decades of work, each wizard created a mask devoted to a school of magic. Each was created with a special curse that only their creators knew how to avoid. All were major artifacts.

Before the Cabal of Madness could set their final plans in motion, manifestations of the gods of Unther and Mulhorand destroyed the nation of Imaskar. In the resulting tumult, the masks were scattered to the corners of the world.

Seven of the Imaskarcana are known to exist in modern times. How many have been lost—and what happened to them—depends on which bard tells the tale. The masks are sought after by many, including the Harpers, Halruaan wizards, Red Wizards, the Zhentarim, and the Tel'Teukiira.

A character of any class can use the masks and call upon their powers. They do not impede the wearer's ability to speak, breathe, or limit the wearer's perception.

Detailed here are seven masks. Each description includes adventure hooks that can bring the masks into play. The masks are best put in the hands of—or rather, on the face of—the player characters' principle antagonist.

Ynaerv's Mask
(Necromancy)

This mask—made from both the skull of an elven paladin murdered millennia ago and the antlers of her special mount—is hideous. The mask covers the upper portion of the wearer's face and small copper chains run behind the wearer's head to hold it in place.

The wearer of *Ynaerv's mask* is granted a +10 resistance bonus to saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities of the Necromancy school (but not against supernatural and extraordinary abilities).

The wearer of the mask casts spells of the Necromancy school with a +4 bonus to caster level checks to beat a creature's spell resistance.

As a standard action, the wearer can use the mask to cast *control undead* as an 18th-level sorcerer. She can use this ability a number of times per day equal to three plus her Charisma bonus. This is a spell-like ability.

Each day, the wearer of the mask can use three spells from the list below as though cast by an 18th-level sorcerer: *vampiric touch, animate dead, create undead, create greater undead,* and *soul bind.* This is a spell-like ability

Curse: Each time someone puts on the mask, the wearer must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or be instantly transformed into a curst (see the *Monster Compendium: Monsters of Faerûn* for details on the curst template). A *remove curse* spell destroys the curst. Only a *limited wish* or *wish* spell can restore the curst to life.

Adventure Hooks:

- A kobold approaches the party through an intermediary—a blind bard—to let them know that a kobold sorcerer of her clan has been transformed into a powerful undead. The kobold hopes they can save her clan, which lives in an abandoned mine.
- A widely trusted—but deeply deranged—druid has been secretly using *Ynaerv's mask.* He has an obsession to include undead in the "natural scheme of things." A cranky old wisewoman that the locals fear knows this and worries about what he might do. She warns the characters, but do they believe her when no one else will?

Dhonas's Shroud (Illusion)

This mask has large, colored glass plates that cover the eyes, and a wire mesh covering the mouth. The rest of the mask is made of small silver plates held together by brass bolts. A gray cloth hood lays over the back of the head and holds the mask in place.

The wearer of *Dhonas's shroud* is granted a +10 resistance bonus to saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities of the Illusion school (but not against supernatural and extraordinary abilities).

The wearer of the mask casts spells of the Illusion school with a +2 bonus to caster level checks to beat a creature's spell resistance. In addition, the wearer of the mask adds +2 to the Difficulty Class for all saving throws against spells of the Illusion school (including those cast by the mask).

As a standard action, the wearer can use the mask to cast *mirror image* as an 18th-level sorcerer. He can use this ability a number of times per day equal to three plus his Charisma bonus. This is a spell-like ability.

Wearing the mask distorts and warps light waves around the wearer. This displacement works just like the *displacement* spell and functions continually.

Each day, the wearer of the mask can use three spells from the list below as though cast by an 18th-level sorcerer: *hallucinatory terrain, persistent image, nightmare, veil,* and *weird.* This is a spell-like ability.

Curse: Each time someone puts on the mask, there is a 20% chance that the person will be forever haunted by nightmares any time they sleep. These nightmares have the same effect as the *nightmare* spell as though cast by an 18th-level caster (wearing the mask when sleeping gives the victim the mask's +10 resistance bonus to negate the effect.) A *break enchantment, limited wish, miracle, remove curse,* or *wish* spell cast by an 18th-level caster is required to remove the curse.

Adventure Hooks:

- A bard tells a player character that someone close to them—a parent, a sibling, or a childhood friend—is at a temple dedicated to healing the mentally ill because she has been hallucinating. Upon investigation, the party discovers that a lunatic who escaped from the temple is hiding in nearby catacombs and using the mask to torment those that come to the temple.
- A manic but exhausted-looking man

confronts the PCs and begs their aid. He needs their help to retrieve an artifact from an evil sorcerer so that he can use it to remove a terrible curse the sorcerer cast on him. He is actually a devious illusionist who had been using *Dhonas's shroud* to fool or eliminate his rivals and succumbed to its curse. One of those rivals discovered this, defeated him, and holds the mask in an attempt to ransom back things the illusionist had swindled from her.

Mask of Aberration (Transmutation)

This mask is ghastly patchwork of the skins of creatures badly altered by magic. It wraps around the wearer's head and buttons up the back. The patchwork bits move around randomly at unpredictable times.

The wearer of the *mask of aberration* is granted a +10 resistance bonus to saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities of the Transmutation school (but not against supernatural and extraordinary abilities).

The wearer of the mask casts spells of the Transmutation school with a +4 bonus to caster level checks to beat a creature's spell resistance.

As a standard action the wearer can use the mask to cast *passwall* as an 18th-level sorcerer. She can use this ability a number of times per day equal to three plus her Charisma bonus. This is a spell-like ability.

The mask wearer can walk up walls and even across the ceiling. This works just like the *spider climb* spell and functions continually.

Each day, the wearer of the mask can use three spells from the list below as though cast by an 18th-level sorcerer: *haste, polymorph other, disintegrate, polymorph self, iron body,* and *Tenser's transmutation.* This is a spell-like ability.

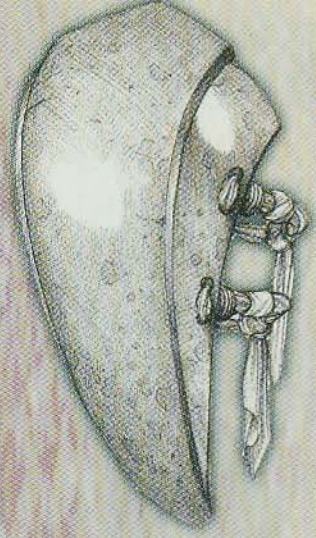
Curse: Each time someone puts on the mask, the wearer must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or become a gibbering mouther (items carried by the character are not transformed). The character loses all memory and personality, effectively becoming a normal gibbering mouther. Spells like *polymorph other* can restore the victim's normal form, but the memory, personality, and intellect of the character will remain that of a gibbering mouther. A *limited wish, miracle, remove curse,* or *wish* spell cast by an 18th-level caster is required to remove the curse and fully restore the victim's shape and mind.

Adventure Hooks:

- A trusted friend of the party tells them that after adventuring in the ruins of Myth Drannor, her brother became obsessed with the power of a terrible

mask. He is currently hiding in the wastes of the Helmlands. She asks that they bring him home.

- The characters meet a red dragon that, if allowed to speak, claims to be an elf transformed by magic. Further investigation reveals that a local cell of the Cult of the Dragon has the *mask of abberation.* They are testing its limits and usefulness.



Shade's Veil (Illusion-shadow)

Shade's Veil is a curved plate of dull, black metal fitted to the wearer's head with cloth straps. It covers the wearer's entire face, hiding all her features. The wearer can see through the mask and perceive her surroundings normally.

The wearer of the *shade's veil* is granted a +5 resistance bonus to saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities of the Illusion school (but not against supernatural and extraordinary abilities).

The wearer of the mask casts spells of the Illusion school with a +2 bonus to caster level checks to beat a creature's spell resistance. In addition, the wearer of the mask adds +6 to the Difficulty Class for all saving throws against spells of the Illusion (shadow) school (including those cast by the mask).

Like a shadow, the wearer of the mask has a supernatural ability to drain Strength from living opponents. A touch from the wearer can deal 1d6 points of temporary Strength damage. The wearer can invoke this power as a free action three times a day plus the character's Charisma bonus. Any humanoid reduced to 0 Strength by this attack becomes a shadow under control of the wearer of the mask.

Mask of Shum (Divination)

The *mask of Shum* is crafted from hundreds of copper coins fused together, each with a death's head stamped on both sides. The largest portion of the mask covers the wearer's upper face, while a hinged part covers the wearer's lower face, or jaw. Leather straps hold the mask on the wearer's head.

The wearer of the *mask of Shum* possesses a powerful second-sight. This second-sight works just like *true seeing* except that it extends to the wearer's normal range of vision and it functions continually.

The mask wearer can comprehend any language. This works just like the *comprehend languages* spell except that the wearer of the mask need not touch the creature or writing and it functions continually.

Each day, the wearer of the mask can use five spells from the list below as though cast by an 18th-level sorcerer: *detect thoughts, true strike, clairaudience/clairvoyance, discern lies, discern location, identify, legend lore,* and *foresight.* This is a spell-like ability.

Curse: Every time the mask is put on, the wearer is assaulted with visions of the past and future. The wearer must make a Will save (DC 20) to resist attempting to make sense of the visions or stand helpless for 5 rounds and suffer 1 point of permanent Wisdom drain at the end of that time. Characters who try to make sense of the visions are often fooled into believing they know the future. A *remove curse* or *break enchantment* spell cast on the wearer during the round that she is helpless will prevent the Wisdom drain.

Adventure Hooks

- The party learns that a human city is in severe economic turmoil, a situation that has developed recently. After investigating, they learn that it is due to the actions of an extremely powerful merchant. Further investigation reveals the merchant has been using the mask to make predictions about the economy and is slowly driving himself insane.
- A Mulhorandi priest named Enrataep offers to pay the characters to get the Mask of Shum for him. While they attempt to retrieve it, agents of the Zhentarim tell Entrataep and the characters lies about each other, to pit them against one another so the Zhentarim can get the mask.

Wearing the mask gives a creature excellent vision even in complete darkness. This vision works just like the *darkvision* spell and functions continually.

Each day, the wearer of the mask can use three spells from the list below as though cast by an 18th-level sorcerer: *shadow walk, project image, greater shadow evocation,* and *shades.* This is a spell-like ability.

Curse: Each time the mask is removed, there is a 20% chance that the wearer suffers 1d6 negative levels. After 24 hours have passed the character must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) for each negative level. Each failed save indicates a lost level. A character killed by this attack becomes a shadow within 1d4 rounds. *Remove curse* has no effect on this curse. Only a *limited wish* or *wish* spell can restore the shadow to life.

Adventure Hooks:

- There have been two assassination attempts on Alusair—the Steel Princess and Regent of Cormyr—in as many weeks. Each involved orcs and the use of shadow magic. If the characters investigate, they will eventually face a very old and very powerful masked orc looking to become a player in Faerûnian politics.

CAMPAIGN CONVERSIONS

While the masks are designed for use in the Forgotten Realms setting, you can easily import them into other campaigns. They can have any history and be from any world. Here are some tips for altering the masks' history for other classic D&D campaigns:

Greyhawk Setting: The masks were part of the official regalia for an ancient sect of arcane spellcasters from the Suel Imperium. When the empire was destroyed, the masks were scattered to the ends of the world. The Circle of Eight and Tenser are trying to destroy the masks, or at least keep them out of the hands of the powers of evil.

Dragonlance Setting: Early wizards who helped found the ancient empire of Ishtar created the masks. They were kept in Kingpriest vaults for untold generations. However, their vault was ruined in the Cataclysm. Later, the ruins were

The Facade (Enchantment)

The *facade* mask is very bizarre in appearance; chains wrap around the wearer's head like gauze, hiding the wearer's features. Only the wearer's eyes remain uncovered.

The wearer of the *facade* is granted a +10 resistance bonus to saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities of the Enchantment school (but not against supernatural and extraordinary abilities).

The wearer of the mask casts spells of the Enchantment school with a +4 bonus to caster level checks to beat a creature's spell resistance.

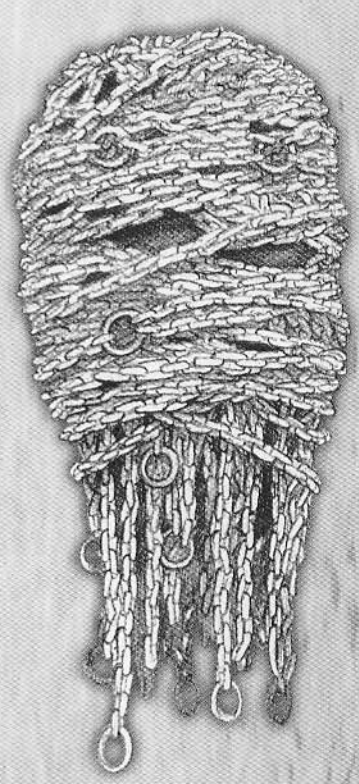
Those that come within 15 feet of the wearer of the mask must make a Will saving throw (DC 25) or react more favorably to the wearer. Their attitude shifts to the next more favorable attitude on the Influencing NPC Attitude Table (see NPC Attitudes on page 149 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Each day, the wearer of the mask can use five spells from the list below as though cast by an 18th-level sorcerer: *suggestion, emotion, Tasha's hideous laughter, mass charm, dominate monster,* and *sleep.* This is a spell-like ability.

Curse: Every time the mask is put on, there is a chance the wearer is overcome by paranoia and low self-esteem. The wearer must make a Will save (DC 20) or stand cowering for 5 rounds and suffer 1 point of permanent Charisma drain at the end of that time. A *remove curse* or *break enchantment* spell cast on the wearer during the round that he is cowering will prevent the Charisma drain.

Adventure Hooks

- The party learns that the tomb of a famous bard has been looted. Upon investigation, they learn the dead bard used the mask to force people to do his will. The mask has been stolen by whomever robbed the tomb.
- Red Wizards have gotten the *facade* mask. They are experimenting with altering its properties to make the mask more useful and testing the mask on a local village.



The Master's Face (Conjuration)

This terrible mask is made of cast iron, has humanoid features, and sports thirteen short horns. It covers the wearer's entire face.

The wearer of the *master's face* is granted a +10 resistance bonus to saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities of the Conjuration school (but not against supernatural and extraordinary abilities).

The wearer of the mask casts spells of the Conjuration school with a +4 bonus to caster level checks to beat a creature's spell resistance.

Summoned and called creatures must make a Will save (DC 20) when attempting to strike or otherwise directly attack the wearer of the mask. If the save succeeds, the summoned creature can attack normally. If the save fails, the creature can't follow through with the attack and that part of the creature's action is lost.

Each day, the wearer of the mask can use three spells from the list below as though cast by an 18th-level sorcerer: *planar binding, gate, summon monster VI, summon swarm,* and *mount.* This is a spell-like ability.

Curse: Each time someone puts on the mask, there is a cumulative 20% chance that the wearer is cursed to be hated by summoned and called creatures. Creatures summoned or called by the person cursed are automatically hostile toward the caster (see NPC Attitudes on page 149 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide.*) A *limited wish, miracle, remove curse,* or *wish* spell cast by an 18th-level caster is required to remove the curse.

Adventure Hook

- The party learns an old ally is hunting for the mask for his true master; the lord of Zhentil Keep. The party must beat the bard to the mask, located somewhere in southern Thay, to keep it out of his—and thus his evil master's—hands.

looted and the mask reappeared. Now forces of good and evil search for these powerful artifacts.

Ravenloft Setting: The masks appeared out of the mists, and no one knows their full story. Strahd managed to acquire two, and Azalin had collected three through the efforts of his minions. However, after Azalin disappeared, all the known masks vanished. Some sages have learned that a secret cabal is gathering the masks. To what purpose, only this cabal knows.

Planescape Setting: The chant has it that the masks belonged to those who ruled the city before the Lady of Pain. These same rumors say that if someone finds all the masks—including the "lost" ones—they will have the power needed to oust the Lady. Sensible cutters consider this claptrap, but it would probably be a good idea to stay clear of anyone seen wearing one of the masks.

THE BESTIARY

SUBTERRANEAN SCARES

BY JOSEPH R. TERRAZZINO · ILLUSTRATED BY BRIAN SNODDY

Three years ago, four separate teams of scholars ventured into a largely uncharted region of the Underdark. Recently, the survivors of one of those groups emerged with trembling hands, pallid faces, and fearful eyes.

As these brave adventurers recuperate—some under the care of clerics who tend to their shattered minds as well as their injured bodies—we pore over their field notes and post-expedition interviews to bring you, the educated adventurer, a complete account of their findings. Forewarned is forearmed when exploring the Underdark, and even the sturdiest explorer must know when to fight and when to run away.

The returning members of the ill-fated expedition report another five novel subterranean menaces, each as bizarre as it is deadly. The courageous explorers studied each species as closely as possible with little regard for their own safety, tracking the creatures through the dank subterranean world for periods of up to five months. Many lives were lost during the observation of these monsters, but a wealth of insights and revelations were gained.

While Wilnod the Invoker was devoured alive by a swarm of verx, it was his daringly close inspection of the creatures' lair that yielded so much of our current knowledge. The surviving expedition members were quick to retreat upon observing his fate.

Tarshio the thief was bitten in half by a slimy giant we know as a genocid. When last spotted, his corpse was being invaded by a pack of odious white slugs, which the genocid itself inserted into his dead body. Ironically, it was Trashio who artfully sketched the beast from a ridge less than twenty feet from the giant's lair.

A dozen dwarves hired as guides were captured by a hideous two-headed beast dubbed the jawg. They were tossed into a slimy black pit full of screaming prisoners and never seen again. Only days earlier, it was their bravery against the jawg that allowed the scholars to escape unharmed.

By the end of the expedition, the explorers were fleeing for their lives. If not for the altruistic nature of a tribe of Underdark creatures known as minwhelgos, they would never have returned to the surface world. Ultimately, the explorers were rescued from a party of drow by these hulking reptiles, who mangled the dark elves with frighteningly powerful strikes of stone weapons. After feasting on fallen drow, the minwhelgo guided the survivors upward into a network of tunnels that ultimately emerged from a mountainside three miles above.

Once above, the expedition members were surprised and horrified to learn that their discoveries were not yet over. Within a day's travel of the mountain, they encountered a farming community plagued by crop-killing, child-stealing ghosts. In reality, these "ghosts" were members of an Underdark species called deeplings. Exhaustive investigation revealed the farmers were the subject of vengeful attacks as a result of the murder of a deepling.

Adventurers beware! These new discoveries bode ill for any who would intrude on the territory of the subterranean horrors that destroyed nearly all of those who went in search of them.

JAWG

Huge Aberration

Hit Dice	14d8+70 (133 hp)
Initiative	+1 (+1 Dex)
Speed	40 ft.
AC	15 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +6 natural)
Attacks	Bite +18/+13 melee; Claw +16 melee; 2 claws +16 melee
Damage	Bite 2d6+8; Claw 2d4+8; claws 1d4+8 melee
Face/Reach	15 ft. by 15 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks	Poison, pounce, spells
Special Qualities	Damage reduction 10/+2, darkvision 60 ft., SR 20, two heads
Saves	Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +11
Abilities	Str 27, Dex 13, Con 20, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 16
Skills	Concentration +22, Jump +18, Listen +13, Search +10, Spot +13
Feats	Combat Casting, Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack
Climate/Terrain	Underground
Organization	Solitary or gang (2-4)
Challenge Rating	14
Treasure	Double standard
Alignment	Always chaotic neutral
Advancement	15-16 HD (Huge), 16-25 HD (Gargantuan)

Jawgs are massive scaled beasts covered in layers of dark fur. They have two huge, reptilian legs ending in claws the length of short swords. Around their muscular bodies they strap packs and chests in which to keep their belongings.

Jawgs have two heads. The first head is round, sunken, and vaguely humanoid with a flat, pointed nose and a wide, fanged mouth. Two milky white eyes peer out from a protruding brow. The second head is on the end of its reptilian tale. This head, named the "greater mind," resembles a hairless human head with only two black slits for ears. Beneath the greater mind, two reptilian arms branch from the tail, each with a large hand of five long fingers ending in thorny black claws.

Through the greater mind, the jawg speaks and casts spells. Jawg voices are melodic, and are fluent in Draconic, Undercommon, and Dwarven.

The jawg's origins are obscure, but some sages theorize that the Jawgs were created by a dragon's botched attempt to create a race of perfect servitors. Others believe the jawg were created by fire giant wizards during an ancient war between the fire giants and dragons.

Combat

Jawgs despise all dragons and live to hunt and kill their hated foes. Most camp secretly near a dragon lair, gathering information on the dragon's routine, intelligence, age, and so on before making a surprise assault. They often hire dozens of scouts and spies to gather information for them and will sometimes hire parties of adventurers to delve into a dragon's lair to test its defenses.

Poison (Ex): Bite, Fortitude save (DC 22), initial damage 1d6 temporary Dexterity, secondary damage 2d6 temporary dexterity. The jawg's poisonous bite is particularly effective against dragons and their kin. The DC for Dragons and creatures with the Reptilian subtype is 30.

Pounce (Ex): If a jawg leaps upon a foe during the first round of combat, it can make a full attack even if it has already taken a move action.

Spells: All Jawg cast spells as 12th-level sorcerers (save DC = 13 + the spell's level.)

Skills: The jawg's two heads give it a +2 racial bonus to Listen, Spot, and Search checks.

Jawg Society

Jawgs are nomadic, tracking and preying on dragons and their ilk. Some draw treaties with other Underdark communities, employing them as spies and feeding on their slave populations in return for protection. Some Underdark observers report instances in which jawgs posed as deities before lesser beings, enjoying blasphemous praise and sacrifices while plotting the demise of a nearby dragon. Jawgs spend most of their time studying magic and spying on their intended victims.

Jawgs often have a score of slave creatures and a dozen lackeys to help keep the slaves in line. Their lairs always contain larders—deep pits in which they store food creatures.

INLIVING SPAWN

Small Aberration

Hit Dice	1d8 (4 hp)
Initiative	+3 (+3 Dex)
Speed	20 ft.
AC	16 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural)
Attacks	Bite -2 melee
Damage	Bite 1d6-2
Face/Reach	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks	—
Special Qualities	Blindsight
Saves	Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0
Abilities	Str 7, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 2
Skills	Hide +9, Move Silently +9
Feats	—
Climate/Terrain	Underground
Organization	Solitary
Challenge Rating	¼
Treasure	None
Alignment	Always chaotic evil
Advancement	—

The genocid is a hairless giant with pale white skin covered in a thin coat of slime. Hectic tangles of blue and red veins throb beneath the surface of their translucent skin. The back of the genocid's skull droops almost to its back, and it spurts rancid-smelling steam through wet holes. These pores are spiracles, or breathing holes, that dot the beast's entire skull and frequently weep puss. The genocid has two teardrop-shaped eyes, always turned in an angry expression and glowing a fierce blue. Their square jaws are racked with brown-green teeth, and its bulging cheeks shift with faint gurgling sounds. Its arms are long and muscular, and its stumpy legs are wider than tree trunks and encircled with black hooves. Its hands sport five bulbous fingers, each sprouting dozens of wiry needles. Its massive chest is lined with six functional gills. The genocid's stomach is so bloated that it appears ready to burst. Beneath the flesh, things squirm and pop, raising the skin and sometimes forcing open the vertical mouth of its belly.

The genocid never walks alone. In its great cheeks are pouches that it stuffs with poisonous snakes. A natural affinity for snakes allows the genocid to bring serpents into compliance with its wishes.

Nestled in the genocid's stomach are what scholars call "inliving spawn," essentially the genocid's children. Inliving spawn are large, pungent, white slugs with circular mouths of sharp teeth. They are produced within the genocid and harbored until the parent creature finds them a suitable host.

Genocids speak a language of huffs, puffs, snorts, wheezes, and squeaks. Their trademark call is a chilling, high-pitched squeal. They know no other languages but can communicate with snakes of all kinds.

Combat

Genocids hunt for large creatures or enough creatures to feed themselves, their snakes, and their spawn. Thus single creatures might be ignored by a genocid. Somewhat slow on land, they prefer to surprise opponents by lurking in underground pools and rivers.

Needles (Ex): Genocids can unleash a volley of six needles from their fingertips as a standard action. This attack has a range of 60 feet with no range increment. The genocid can launch sixty needles in any one day.

Spew Snakes (Ex): A genocid can spew poisonous snakes from its mouth. As a standard action, the genocid can spew as many as twelve Small vipers at a target up to 20 feet away. The genocid makes a ranged touch attack to hit the target. If it succeeds, all the Small vipers spewed at that target can attack the target as though they have charged. If the genocid fails, the vipers land next to the target and attack normally on the next round. The genocid carries 6d4 vipers in its cheek pouches at any given time.

Throw Spawn (Ex): As a standard action, a genocid can pull an inliving spawn out of its stomach and throw it at adversaries up to 20 feet away. The genocid makes a ranged touch attack to hit the target. If it succeeds, the inliving spawn attacks the target as though it has charged. If the genocid fails, the spawn land next to the target. Spawn do not attack active foes once they drop to the ground. Instead, they attempt to return to the genocid's stomach. If, however, there is a fresh carcass or helpless creature nearby, the spawn seeks to feed on and inhabit it instead. The inliving spawn moves toward any creature within 20 feet that has been dead for less than two days and inhabits its body. During the next few days, a large cocoon forms about the dead creature. After a week a full-grown genocid bursts out. If the cocoon is broken (hardness 5, 20 hp) before a week has passed, the genocid forming within dies. If there is a helpless, disabled, or dying foe within 20 feet, inliving spawn attack it instead, attempting coup de grace attacks until the creature dies.

Genocids harbor up to six inliving spawn within their stomachs. They generate a new spawn once a week so long as they have room.

Snake Affinity (Ex): Genocids have a strange affinity for snakes, and most become docile in their presence. Snakes within 20 feet of the genocid must make a Will saving throw (DC 17) or view the genocid as a friend with the same effects as *animal friendship*. Because of this ability, a genocid almost always accompanied by a number of snakes equalling up to two times its Hit Dice including those it keeps in its mouth.

GENOCID

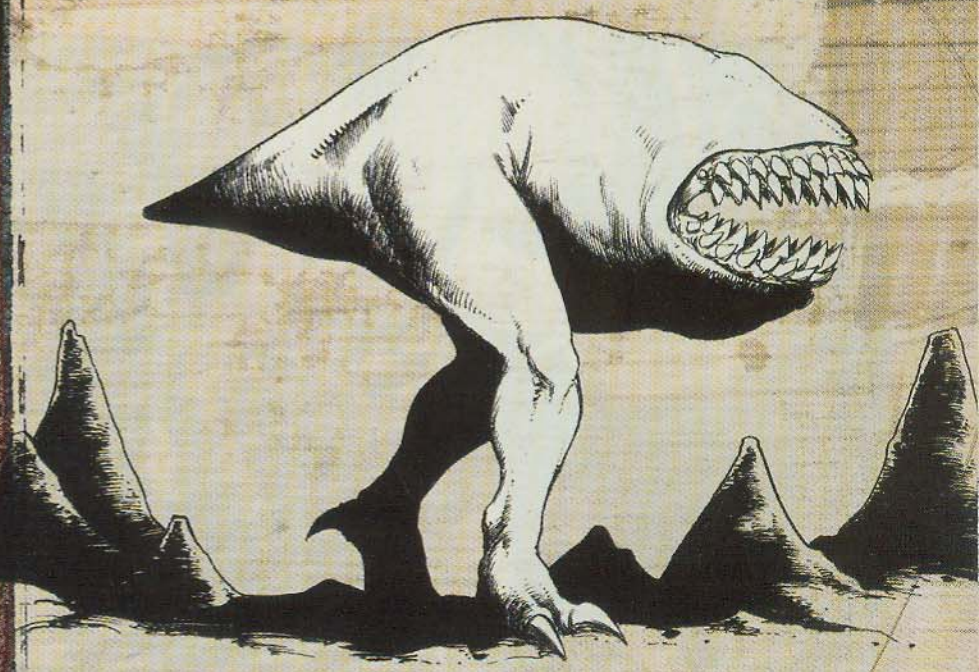
Huge Aberration

Hit Dice	10d8+50 (95 hp)
Initiative	+5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed	30 ft., swim 30 ft.
AC	13 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural)
Attacks	2 claws +14 melee; or 6 needles +7 ranged
Damage	Claw 2d4+8; or needle 1d3
Face/Reach	10 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks	Needles, spew snakes, throw spawn
Special Qualities	Darkvision 60 ft., poison immunity, snake affinity
Saves	Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +7
Abilities	Str 26, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 4
Skills	Listen +12, Spot +12, Swim +15
Feats	Alertness, Improved Initiative
Climate/Terrain	Underground
Organization	Solitary
Challenge Rating	6
Treasure	Standard
Alignment	Always chaotic evil
Advancement	11-15 HD (Huge), 16-20 HD (Gargantuan)

VERX SWARM

Medium-Size Aberration

Hit Dice	4d8+4 (22 hp)
Initiative	+2 (Dex)
Speed	30 ft., burrow 10 ft., climb 10 ft.
AC	12 (+2 Dex)
Attacks	Bite +3 melee
Damage	Bite 2d4+2
Face/Reach	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks	Infest
Special Qualities	Blindsight, scent, swarm
Saves	Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2
Abilities	Str 14, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 9, Cha 5
Skills	Climb +4, Hide +14, Move Silently +6, Spot +11
Feats	—
Climate/Terrain	Underground
Organization	Colony (1-4)
Challenge Rating	3
Treasure	None
Alignment	Always neutral
Advancement	5-10 HD (Large) 11-16-HD (Huge)



Verx are tiny, bipedal, arm-less carnivores that nest inside stalactites and stalagmites. Their bodies are roughly tear drop shaped and covered in a glossy, iridescent, albino skin. Their legs resemble muscled human legs, but their feet sport three toes—one from the heel—each of which is tipped with a wicked yellow claw. Verx have no eyes, ears or noses, but they do have wide mouths with short red tongues and scores of metallic teeth. The verx use their powerful legs and strong teeth to burrow quickly through stone and softer materials.

The verx's lack of sight and hearing forces them to rely on an organ in their tongues, that allows them to sample the air in their immediate vicinity and hunt prey by following the particular airborne taste of its flesh.

Verx communicate via some sort of primitive telepathy and recognize other verx by their airborne taste. Verx never mistake one another for prey.

Combat

Verx dig a complex maze of tunnels as their lair. These tunnels run through the center of a stalagmite or stalactite and branch through up to 30 feet of its immediate vicinity. Verx wait in these burrows for creatures to near their holes, then attack in a swarm. Verx kill prey and drag remains, bit by mangled bit, into their maze of tunnels for future consumption.

Blindsight (Ex): Verx can ascertain all foes within 40 feet by scent.

Swarm (Ex): Verx attack and move as swarm. The swarm moves as a unit and is treated as a single creature for the purpose of spell effects. The verxs' small size allows the swarm to pass through openings as small as two inches in diameter. The swarm cannot be effectively grappled, bull rushed, or otherwise physically constrained so long as an opening two inches in diameter remains. (Thus verx swarms pass through most nets and cages.)

Infest (Ex): An opponent damaged by the verx swarm's melee attack must make a Fortitude save (DC 13) or be infested. Tiny verx burrow within the creature's body causing damage and making it difficult to concentrate.

The infestation causes 1d4 points of Constitution damage that cannot be healed until a *remove disease* spell is cast upon the infested victim.

Infested creatures must make a Concentration check (DC 10 + the amount of Constitution damage done by infesting verx) to do actions that require patience and concentration (such as moving silently or casting spells). A *remove disease* spell destroys all infesting verx and nullifies this problem.

Skills: Verx swarms can hide in nooks and crannies that a Medium-size creature could not take advantage of and thus receive a +10 racial bonus to hide checks. Although incapable of sight, the many individual verx tasting the air in search of prey gives a verx swarm a +10 racial bonus to Spot checks.

Minwhelgos are hulking, bipedal creatures with thickly muscled shoulders and pebbly green hides. Their long heads hang low on their torsos, and their cheekbones extend sharply from the sides of their faces. A minwhelgo's bulbous eyes are wet with transparent mucous. Their mouths curve downward like extreme frowns and chronically drip saliva. Two extremely flexible, arm-like antennae protrude from minwhelgo skulls, each tipped with an organ faceted and colored like a cluster of lackluster diamonds. These organs emit bright light, which minwhelgos use to light their way when underground. Minwhelgos are stalwart and have heavy reptilian tails. Their legs are stumpy and their feet are hoofed like an elephant's.

Minwhelgo are an ancient nomadic race devoted to fanatic purposes in life. "Free the Oppressed," "End the Madness," and "Clean the Darkness" are common minwhelgo battle calls. Minwhelgo see themselves as the honorable knights of the Underdark, living to uncover and thwart subterranean evils.

Combat

Minwhelgos carry crude but hefty clubs crafted from stalagmites. They use these heavy weapons upon threats to their homes and evil creatures of the underdark. Minwhelgos are the bane of drow and illithid communities, as they crusade against these tyrannical races. Minwhelgos prefer to strike quickly, killing as many foes as possible in surprise sweeps through enemy strongholds. They do not seek the downfall of a community in one battle but instead continually harry it with random guerrilla attacks. When minwhelgos decide a community is too weak to be a considerable threat to the area, they leave it and move on to another.

Minwhelgos use a similar strategy when confronting a smaller number of creatures, but individuals or creatures equal in number to the minwhelgos are often fought to the death.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*magic missile, protection from evil,* and *spider climb.* These abilities work as the spells cast by a 4th-level sorcerer (save DC 12 + the level of the spell).

Antennae Lights (Su): Minwhelgos can use their antennae to produce light as bright as a torch at will.

Minwhelgo Society

Minwhelgos prefer damp, fungus-laden caverns. They are nomadic but often return to previous resting spots. They sleep standing in a circle with some members of the tribe standing watch. Minwhelgo delight in camping dangerously near their foes and seek out caverns that overlook enemy cities so they can plan attacks. They sometimes capture strongholds on the edge of enemy communities and stay within the battlefield.

Minwhelgo have no leaders, but they revere their elders. The elderly are the most seasoned warriors and often advise parties on courses of action, yet decisions in minwhelgo parties are finalized by majority vote.

Minwhelgo are asexual and produce 1d4 offspring every eighteen months. Young are cared for by the entire tribe and trained for war from the beginning of childhood.

Minwhelgo free prisoners of their enemies and make an effort to escort surface dwellers to safe routes home.

MINWHELGO

Medium-Size Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice	6d8 (27 hp)
Initiative	+1 (+1 Dex)
Speed	30 ft.
AC	17 (+1 Dex, +6 natural)
Attacks	Greatclub +11 melee; or Claw +11 melee
Damage	Greatclub 1d10+7; claw 1d4+5
Face/Reach	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks	Spell-like abilities
Special Qualities	Antennae lights, low-light vision, poison immunity
Saves	Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +5
Abilities	Str 20, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 14
Skills	Climb +14, Jump +10, Wilderness Lore +10
Feats	Track
Climate/Terrain	Underground
Organization	Family (2-4), band (5-30), or tribe (30-60 plus 4 elders of 3rd-10th level)
Challenge Rating	4
Treasure	Standard
Alignment	Usually chaotic good
Advancement	By character class

DEEPLING

Small Fey

Hit Dice	1d6 (3 hp)
Initiative	+3 (+3 Dex)
Speed	30 ft.
AC	17 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural)
Attacks	4 slams -2 melee; or 4 stones +3 ranged
Damage	Slam 1d2-2; stone 1d4-2
Face/Reach	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks	Scare
Special Qualities	Darkvision (120 ft.), light blindness, *passwall*, SR 16
Saves	Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +2
Abilities	Str 7, Dex 17, Con 10 Int 5, Wis 16, Cha 16
Skills	Climb +7, Listen +8, Spot +8, Tumble +18
Feats	—
Climate/Terrain	Underground
Organization	Gang (2-4), band (6-11), or tribe (20-80)
Challenge Rating	1/2
Treasure	Nonstandard (double goods)
Alignment	Always chaotic neutral
Advancement	2 HD (Medium-size)

Deeplings are small, four-armed, subterranean fey with light green skin dotted with rusty growths and scabby pock marks. Their fat, equine heads bear manes of dark green and brown hair. They have short necks and stout torsos. Each of their hands boasts three thick fingers. Their short gangly legs end in circular, toeless feet are equipped with dozens of fleshy blue suction cups they use to climb. Long, pointed ears poke from their manes like steeples, and beady black eyes dot each side of their heads above a large maw with an overbite of jagged teeth.

Deeplings communicate through in a language of their own that consists of deep, vibrating words of many syllables. Witnesses have described it as sounding like mischievous giggling.

Combat

Deeplings engage in combat only when forced.

Scare (Ex): When deeplings feel threatened or sense predators, they laugh in a reverberating, deep-throated tone. This produces an unsettling effect that works like a *scare* spell cast by a 3rd-level sorcerer (Will save DC 15). If the save is successful, that opponent cannot be affected again by that deepling's scare ability for one day.

Passwall (Sp): Deepling laughter drives most predators away, but if it doesn't, deeplings attempt to escape conflict with their spell-like ability.

8/day-*passwall*. This ability works as the spell cast by a 10th-level sorcerer.

Light Blindness (Ex): Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds deeplings for 1 round. In addition, they suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls, saves, and skill checks while operating in bright light.

Skills: Deeplings have a +10 racial bonus to Tumble and Climb checks.

Society

Deeplings wander relatively close to the surface. They sleep in cubbies of damp soil, furnished with precious stones and flowers from above. Deeplings search for farms and orchards at night, creeping warily onto the surface through passages they dig. When a family of deeplings encounter a farm or orchard, they feed on its fruit every night until there is nothing left. For this reason, deeplings are dubbed the "farmer's ghost" in many regions.

Trapping a deepling is difficult, but it can be done. Deeplings fear sunlight but delight in the rays of the full moon, often basking in them after a heavy meal. Farmers can net packs of lazy deepling at these times. Deeplings enjoy music as well. Often, a musician can lure a pack of deeplings from their holes beneath a farm with his melodies. If the musician shows no hostile intent, the deeplings will show themselves and dance about the musician, giggling and spinning under the moon. Once the musician ceases to play, the deeplings will retreat into hiding.

There is profound need for caution when ridding a land of deeplings. If any person kills a deepling but allows one of its fellows to escape, a whole tribe might return within a year to seek out the murderer and his family, tormenting them at night so they cannot sleep, stealing livestock, and even luring children into the Underdark. D

Nodwick in:
THE TEMPLE OF ELEMENTAL EVIL:
Elementary Evil, my dear Henchman!
WHEN WE LAST LEFT OUR HEROES, THEY FACED DEATH AT THE HANDS OF A QUARTET OF EARTH ELEMENTALS! WOULD THE SHRINE OF EARTH BECOME OUR STALWART BAND'S TOMB?
HOLD UP, MUD-WRESTLING FANS! NO ROUGHHOUSING UNTIL YOU WIPE YOUR FEET!
WELCOME
NOT TERRIBLY BRIGHT, ARE THEY?
IT'S A GOOD THING I BROUGHT OUR MAGIC MAT OF MALEVOLENCE VS. MUD!
BE SURE TO PUT IT BACK ON THE PORCH WHEN WE GET HOME! IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT KEEPS YEAGAR FROM LEAVING A TRAIL TO HIS ROOM!
ARTAX? WHY DO THE EARTH PRIESTS HAVE THIS CROP OF MUSHROOMS GROWING IN THEIR SHRINE?
AH. THESE ARE A VILE SPECIES THAT CAN BE USED TO INDUCE A ZOMBIE-LIKE STATE IN THOSE WHO EAT THEM. I'M NOT SURPRISED THEY'RE GROWN HERE.
OKAY, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE TOMATOES, ONIONS, BELL PEPPERS--
IT'S WELL-KNOWN THAT MOST EVIL MINIONS ARE VEGETARIANS. ONWARD!
NEXT, THE FEARSOME FOES FROM THE FIRE TEMPLE ARE FOUGHT!
THAT WAS ALMOST TOO EASY!
THAT'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU WORSHIP FIRE!
I GUESS THAT MADE THEM EXTRA VULNERABLE TO PIFFANY'S CREATE WEENIES 'N' S'MORES SPELL.
I'LL NEVER LOOK AT A COOK OUT THE SAME WAY AGAIN!
I'D STILL LIKE TO KNOW WHAT THEY WERE DOING WITH THESE.
AND WHAT ABOUT THESE BOX-THINGIES? AND THE WEIRD OVENS?
TOO MUCH THINKING AND NOT ENOUGH MONSTER-THUMPIN'! C'MON!
SOON, THE WATER TEMPLE WAS DISTILLED...
DEFEATED BY THEIR OWN JUGGERNAUT. HOW IRONIC.
DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT "IRONIC" MEANS?
NO, BUT IT SOUNDED PROFOUND, DIDN'T IT?
WHAT WERE THEY DOING WITH IT, ANYWAY?
IT LOOKS LIKE THEY WERE FLATTENING SOME KIND OF...DOUGHY SUBSTANCE WITH IT... PERHAPS THESE ARE PARTS FOR A NEW KIND OF GOLEM. OR--
THE WAYS OF EVIL ARE MYSTERIOUS AND BORING, YADDA, YADDA, YADDA. IF IT ISN'T LOOT OR FERMENTED IN A BARREL, I AIN'T INTERESTED.
LOCATING THE SHRINE OF AIR WAS LIKE TRYING TO HOLD ONTO...WELL...
'SCUZE ME, BUT WE WANNA FIND THE SHRINE OF AIR.
IT EXISTS ALL AROUND YOU! THE TEMPLE OF AIR IS ALL PERVASIVE! THOUGH YOU DO NOT SEE IT, IT SURROUNDS YOUR VERY BEING! THE AIR TEMPLE IS OMNIPRESENT!
I GUESS YOU'RE THE AIR PRIEST, THEN. UM, WHAT'S WITH THE DIPPY OUTFIT?
I'M TRYING TO BUY BACK THE DEED TO THE PHYSICAL AIR SHRINE SO I NEED TO MOON-LIGHT. SAY, COULD YOU BUY THESE PIES? SOMEONE MADE A CRANK CALL AND THIS'LL COME OUTTA MY SALARY.
DELIVERY PERSON CARRIES LESS THAN 20 GOLD PIECES
THAT'S ALL FOUR ELEMENTS!
BUT THERE'S MORE BELOW THIS LEVEL, I KNOW IT!
WHAT HORRIBLE FORCES AWAIT US?
NAUGHTY AIR MAN!
WHAP!
MORE EVIL

BASH
ALL CLEAR...
I'M REALLY STARTING TO WORRY ABOUT THESE RUNE-COVERED DOORS WE'RE BREAKING.
BUT NODWICK'S HEAD DOESN'T GO THROUGH STONE, REMEMBER?
HE HAS A POINT.
THE DEMONESS ZUGGTMOY REVEALS HERSELF!
FOOLS! YOU HAVE SUNDERED THE FINAL SEAL HOLDING ME PRISONER! MY PLAN TO CONQUER THE WORLD WITH PIZZA PIES IS NOW UNSTOPPABLE!
PIZZA?
ALL THOSE YEARS DOWN HERE HAVE TURNED MS. FUNGUS FATALLE INTO A FRUIT LOOP!
IDIOTS! I USED THE POWER OF EACH ELEMENTAL TEMPLE TO CREATE MY PIES: INGREDIENTS, DOUGH, COOKING, AND DELIVERY!
NOW THAT I'M FREE, I CAN START AN IRRESISTIBLE AD CAMPAIGN TO SEDUCE MORTALS INTO EATING MY PIZZAS. THE MUSHROOMS ON THE PIES WILL TURN ALL WHO EAT THEM INTO MY SLAVES!
NOW, SINCE YOU SO KINDLY GRANTED MY PAROLE, I SHALL TAKE MY LEAVE OF YOU.
IT'S FINALS WEEK, YOU KNOW. SALES SHOULD BE PHENOMENAL!
WHAT IN-- MY TELEPORT SPELL FAILED! I'M STILL STUCK HERE!
WAS THERE ANOTHER DOOR WE MISSED?
NO! LOOK!
ALL OF THOSE RUNES WERE IMPRINTED ON NODWICK'S HELMET WHEN HIS HEAD HIT THE DOORS! THEY'RE STILL KEEPING THE "MUSHROOM PRINCESS" HERE!
OH, WELL THAT MAKES ALL THE SKULL FRACTURES WORTHWHILE...
NO! MY PIZZA EMPIRE WAS SO CLOSE! I EVEN HAD AN IDIOTIC PUPPET MASCOT TO MARKET MY PIES TO KIDS!
WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO FIX THE DOORS.
THAT'LL TAKE TIME...
I AGREE, BUT WE CAN'T LEAVE THE RUNES UNGUARDED.
DID YOU PACK EXTRA SOCKS, NODWICK?
NOW WAIT JUST A PORTOBELLO-PICKIN' MINUTE...
AN EARLY EVENING, SEVERAL DAYS LATER...
LOOK, I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG WE'RE GOING TO BE ROOMMATES, BUT I'D APPRECIATE IT IF YOU'D QUIT USING MY TOOTHBRUSH! NOW, ABOUT ALL OF THOSE SHIITAKE 'SHROOMS GROWING IN THE BATHTUB...
THEY'RE PAYBACK FOR THAT FILTHY POTPOURRI YOU KEEP LEAVING OUT! NOW SHUT UP OR YOU'LL GET A ZOMBIE-MUSHROOM DEEP DISH WHERE THE SUN DON'T SHINE!
CURSE the COOK
End

Dealing With Different Surfaces Painting Miniatures, Part 4

ROLE MODELS

by Mike McVey • photographs by Craig Cudnohufsky

Last month we started to look at techniques that added depth and realism to your miniatures—highlighting and shading. These techniques work by exaggerating the lighting effects on the surface of a miniature, so the higher surfaces that would naturally catch the light are painted in a lighter tone, and the areas that would be in shadow are painted in a deeper tone. We looked at these techniques in general terms last month, but now we're going to examine how they can be applied to specific areas and types of surfaces found on your miniatures.

Surfaces

When miniatures are sculpted, a great deal of thought goes into how each of the different parts of the model will be represented. For example, a fur cloak will have a far heavier surface texture than a leather jerkin. When you first examine a miniature, all these different surfaces and textures might seem a little daunting; but by using certain techniques, you can turn them to your advantage and produce some really great effects quickly and easily. This month we'll look at a couple of techniques to deal with heavily textured surfaces such as fur and chainmail. These techniques are **drybrushing** and **washing**.

Drybrushing

The easiest and quickest way to produce highlighting effects on textured surfaces is with drybrushing. As the name suggests, most of the paint is removed from the brush so that the bristles are fairly dry. The tip of the brush is then gently flicked across the textured surface so that the paint only adheres to the most prominent areas. Drybrushing is a pretty easy technique to learn, and once you've mastered it you can produce some great and quick results. There are a few things that you need to watch for, and we'll go over those shortly, but first let's go through the technique stage by stage. For this example, let's say you are painting a ragged chainmail shirt on an orc. Chainmail (and some other types of armor) provide the ideal surface for drybrushing—heavily defined texture.

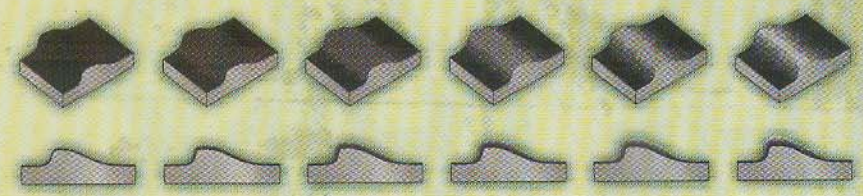
1 Before you can start drybrushing, you should have painted the chainmail with a base coat of black—most of the surface will be covered by the drybrushed highlights, but it will be left showing in the recesses to provide shading. It is important to let the base coat dry before proceeding.

2 Load-up a mid-size brush (I generally use a 1 for drybrushing) with a fairly dark silver metallic color. You can either mix straight silver with black to get this or use a ready mixed color such as chainmail or gunmetal. You don't want too much paint on the brush, just enough to cover the bristles halfway up. Now wipe the brush back and forth on a paper towel until the paint leaves no easily visible trace. You are aiming to remove nearly all of the liquid and just leave a bit on the bristles.

3 Now carefully flick the tip of the brush back and forth across the surface of the chainmail several times. If you look closely, you will

Because the skin should appear to be smoother, more progressive layers were used to bring out the form. With the hair, which should appear to be somewhat oily, brighter spots were used.

This diagram demonstrates the way to bring out the natural texture or modelling of the miniature. By progressively building up the value in layers you can prevent your finished project from looking too bold. In this case gray paint has been added to a dark primer or base coat. As lighter shades of gray are used, a smaller area is covered and the final effect really draws out the form. You can also see a cross-section suggesting how the paint might build up if it were unusually thick.



see that the chainmail pattern is starting to get picked out in silver, but only the top surface is taking the color.

4 Next lighten the metallic color you are using by adding a little silver and repeat the process.

5 Keep on lightening the metallic color and drybrushing onto the model, but each time make the brush-strokes lighter so that in the end you are drybrushing with pure silver and only barely touching the surface of the miniature with the tip of the brush.

The whole aim of the process is to build up the highlights gradually to produce a subtle highlighting effect. There are several things to watch out for that will affect the finished result—the most important of which is having the right amount of paint left on the brush when you are drybrushing. As with so many other areas of miniature painting, this really comes down to practice, but here's a handy tip to help you on your way: Try drybrushing the end of your finger! Just paint a small area of a finger tip black, let it dry, then drybrush it silver. If you've got the right amount of paint on the brush, it should pick out your finger print. If there is too much paint on the bristles, the paint will fill the space between the lines.

As mentioned earlier, drybrushing can be applied to most textured surfaces on a miniature—just follow the example above but substitute relevant colors. If you are painting a fur cloak, base coat with a deep brown and drybrush with progressively lighter tones. Drybrushing can be a fairly messy process, and it's quite hard to keep the brush away from the surrounding areas, so it's best to do all the drybrushing on a miniature first. That way you won't spoil areas you've already painted.

Washing

Washing is the opposite of drybrushing in many ways. While drybrushing is used to highlight, washing is used to shade. While in drybrushing the paint is practically dry, in washing it is extremely liquid. Washing is an incredibly useful technique that can be used in more situations than drybrushing.

To put a wash over an area, you need to thin the paint considerably. Thus, when it is painted over a heavily textured surface, it runs off the raised areas and into the recesses providing shading. Of course the more you practice, the better you'll become at the technique, and there are a few things to watch for. Mainly, make sure you don't completely flood the miniature with paint. If you wash too much color over an area, you'll just fill in the detail and end up with a mess. As with drybrushing, it's a technique you'll master with practice.

Artists' Inks

The main trouble with using acrylic paint for washing is that the more you thin the paint, the weaker the color becomes, so the result can be a bit patchy. Artists' inks already have a thin consistency and contain intense pigments, so they are ideal for washing. The colors are really strong if used undiluted, but you can thin them further to reduce the intensity. Make sure you use ink that is watertight when dry or you will re-wet it with any further colors you use. Artist's inks are fairly pricey, but the colors are so strong they will last for ages. You can also combine inks with paints and get all sorts of effects. One good technique is to add a little paint to a wash color to give it some body; this stops the wash from forming into puddles so readily.

Combining Washes With Drybrushing

These two techniques combine well, as they both rely on heavily textured surfaces. Below is an example of how both techniques can be used to paint the fur on a gnoll.

Inks are great for "antiquing" items and adding depth to straps, as demonstrated by this miniature painted by Jason Soles.

1 Paint all of the fur in a mid-brown base color and let it dry thoroughly—this is very important, if you apply a wash over a wet base, you won't believe the mess you end up with!

2 Next, a rich brown ink wash is applied over the whole surface and the miniature is left to dry again. This might take some time, so a hair dryer is handy to speed things up.

3 When the wash is totally dry, drybrush over the surface using the mid-brown base color.

4 You can lighten these highlights further by lightening the base color and drybrushing onto the surface, you can do this as many times as you like to build up the effect.

5 If you find that the highlights are getting too light and the overall effect is too pale, you can put a thinned down wash over it to put a little depth back into the surface. Just add more water to the original wash color so it's not quite so strong.

THE PLAY'S THE THING

by Robin D. Laws • illustrated by John Kovalic

Your Ancestors— Choose Them Wisely

DM | The dwarven matriarch shifts in her chair. She has been so still throughout your petition that it is as though a statue or large rock has suddenly shrugged itself into a new position. She leans forward and, with a raspy voice, says, "Your words are eloquent, for a surface dweller. But we dwarves judge not just the quality of the man but also that of the bloodline that made him. Tell me of your ancestors, so I can properly sort the quality of your words."

YOU | Uh, just let me think for a second . . .

Ever heard the old saying, "You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your relatives?" Well, that's one rule that never applies in a D&D game, at least as far as your PC is concerned. This is especially true in regards to your character's long-dead ancestors.

Your DM probably wants to maintain a certain amount of control over the identities of your living relatives, because, as close contacts, they can give you advantages in play. She might not let you choose the area's toughest paladin or richest merchant as your favorite uncle. But when it comes to the time-shrouded roots of your family tree, you probably have free rein to create the ancestors you want to make your character more fun and interesting.

You can invent and introduce the details of your ancestral line many sessions after your PC first appears. After all, few people introduce themselves by mentioning their great-great-great-great-grandfathers. (Unless those people are dwarves, that is. Ancestral ties are especially important to dwarven characters; if you're playing one, you might want to invent your clan history sooner rather than later.) Introducing your heritage as background detail can add a fresh element to your PC, sometimes even inspiring the DM to involve you in a new plotline.

Let's look at some of the choices available as you mull over your PC's ancestry.

Worthy Predecessor

"As a true scion of the House of Thorelin, I could do no less."

In the modern world, we tend to look at the family tree as just an interesting curiosity. We're just as happy to find a colorful horse thief in the ancestral line as a great statesman or war hero. In D&D worlds, people generally take ancestry much more seriously. Histories can go back for tens if not hundreds of thousands of years, and deeds undertaken in the mythical past still affect the fates of empires. Many believe that a person's destiny can be seen in his bloodline. Sometimes the successful use of great magical relics depends on the wielder's blood ties to its creator or first owner.

If you claim a great hero of the past as an ancestor, you can expect the admiration of those who know his deeds. The glory of this evil-smiting hero, inventive wizard, or pious cleric will reflect on you. A generous DM might give you a +1 bonus on Diplomacy checks when you mention your heritage to people who admire your ancestor. There is a hidden disadvantage; if your deeds are unworthy of your ancestor, you'll be judged even more harshly for them than would a character with a humbler bloodline. If you besmirch your family name, your DM might apply penalties when you try to persuade NPCs to help you.

On the other hand, you might find it interesting to play a PC who can't live up to the reputation of his ancestor. Your skulking thief PC might hate being

reminded of the holy warrior whose name he shares.

Stain on the Family Name

"Yes, my family name is Skavarios. What's it to you?"

To reverse that last idea, you could decide that your most notable ancestor was notorious for acts of folly, betrayal, or blackest evil. Many NPCs will judge you unfairly because of your family's shame. However, you'll know that those willing to look past this prejudice are fair-minded and trustworthy.

Here you're deliberately taking on a disadvantage because you think it will make your PC more interesting to play. Like most disadvantages, clever play can turn this around: Maybe you can score a bonus or two when fooling scoundrels and evildoers that you're on their side.

Decide how your PC feels about her infamous ancestor. Does she carry a chip on her shoulder, expecting others to shun his name? Or is she all the more motivated to perform heroic acts that will eclipse her ancestor's misdeeds in the annals of history?

Humble Origins

"Well, my family's nothing but fishmongers from way on back, not muckety-mucks like all of you, but we all got taught the value of a copper, I'll tell you that."

Noble pedigrees are a staple of fantasy tales, but that doesn't mean your PC can't be the first of his line to leave the farm. The rise of the undistinguished pauper to greatness is also a favorite theme of escapist literature. You might find that it suits your character to claim nothing but humble origins, and to take stubborn pride in the centuries his ancestors have anonymously toiled.

This character can be especially enjoyable if all of your fellow players have chosen to portray exiled princes and lofty nobles. Interrupt the high-flown speeches of the mighty with your plain-spoken, rustic common sense.

Disenfranchised

"Once my forebears owned all these islands—before the Yan-Poch came, and put their homes to the torch."

Your PC's family history might have taken a tragic or disastrous turn. Her ancestors were once great but were defeated in war, deposed in a coup, or otherwise deprived of their rightful birthright. She grew up in humble circumstances, but always with the knowledge of the greatness that had been stolen from her in ages past. Characters with this background might wallow in romantic melancholy or take furious action to redress ancient wrongs.

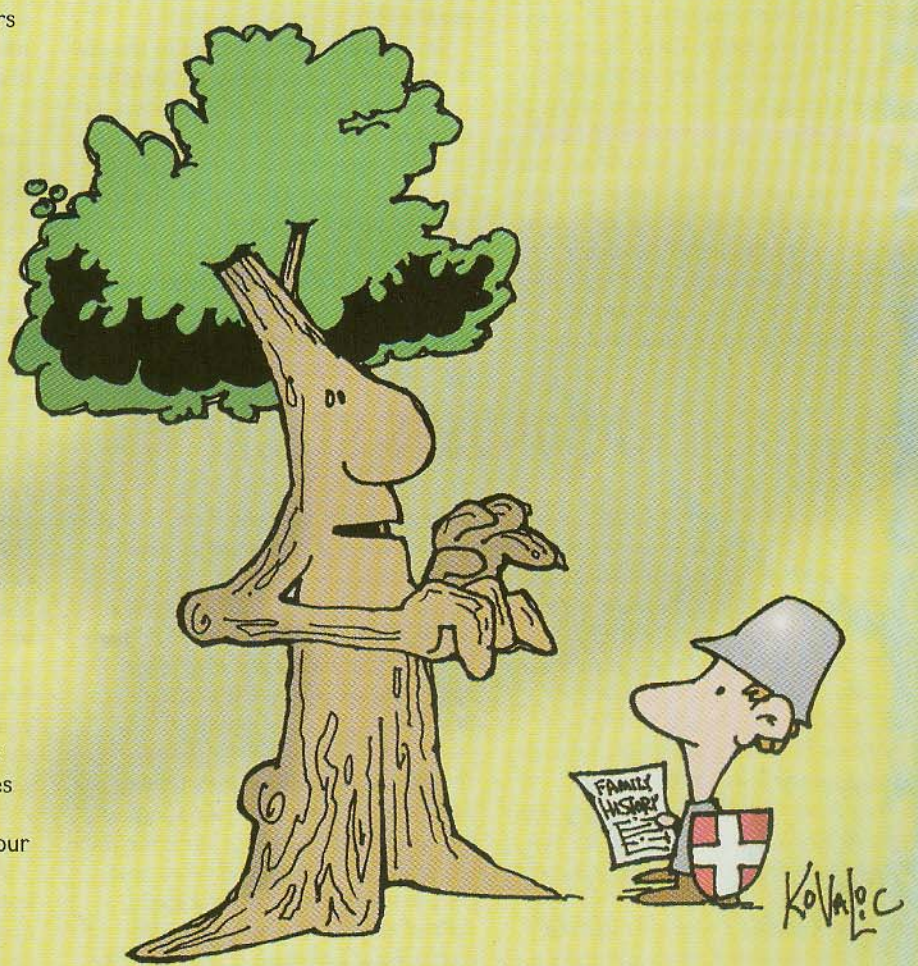
A Gnawing Mystery

"My family tree? It was the oak at the abbey of Vinds, where I was abandoned as a babe, and where the monks raised me."

One interesting answer to this question is to leave it open. You were an orphan or foundling, brought up by an adoptive family or in an institution like an orphanage or priory. Perhaps you were brought up by members of a different race and learned a culture. This background would be more than enough to make your character unique and interesting. Does he yearn to know the truth of his ancestry, or does put off any such thoughts as disloyal to his adoptive family?

The traditions of heroic fiction being what they are, you shouldn't be surprised when your DM takes you up on this gift you've given her by planting clues to your character's ancestry, and, after you discover the truth, making it an integral part of her latest plot.

YOU | **Mother Dwarf, although my family history is modest compared to yours, allow me to tell you of Estorand Orc-Slayer, founder of our line.**



"SO YOU'RE SEARCHING FOR YOUR ROOTS, TOO?"

SAGE ADVICE

Need some help with your game?

by Skip Williams (thesage@wizards.com)

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO
"Sage Advice," *DRAGON Magazine*
1801 Lind Avenue S.W.; Renton, WA 98055

THIS MONTH

The Sage looks at the ins and outs of multiclassing, feats, and a few spells.

The descriptions for the human and the half-elf list the favored class of each as "any" and explain that multiclass humans ignore their highest-level classes when determining whether they suffer experience penalties. Half-elves have the same ability. Can a human or half-elf choose to ignore his lowest-level class, as the "any" would imply, or must he ignore his highest-level class? If he must ignore his highest-level class, would a human 8th-level monk/7th-level paladin then be stuck with a -20% experience penalty if he then become a barbarian, even though a half-orc 8th-level monk/7th-level paladin would receive no experience penalty in the same situation?

DO INHERENT BONUSES STACK?

Yes, the human in your example would indeed suffer an experience penalty (as would a half-elf in the same situation). In this case, "any" means there is no single class these races favor. If humans and half-elves were free to pick any favored class they wanted, and were free to change that choice whenever it suited them, that's what the rules would say. But multiclassed humans and half-elves both ignore their highest level classes instead. Note that a multiclassed human or half-elf with only two classes never has to worry about an experience penalty. Adding a third class, however, takes some planning if one wishes to avoid an experience penalty.

With the *wish* spell, one of the things you can wish for is an inherent bonus of +1 to an ability score. Is this bonus applied to the ability score itself? Or is it a bonus applied only to rolls that ability modifies?

An inherent bonus applies to the ability score. For example, if a character with a Strength score of 14 gains a +1 inherent bonus to Strength, the character's Strength increases to 15. Apply the ability's new ability modifier to all rolls the ability affects.

Do inherent bonuses stack? Let's say a fighter with a Strength score of 16 finds a *+1 manual of gainful exercise* or simply wishes for a +1 inherent bonus to Strength. What happens if the character later receives a *+2 manual of gainful exercise*?

Inherent bonuses don't stack. The character in your example would benefit only from the larger +2 inherent bonus and would have a Strength score of 18.

The *Player's Handbook* says it takes one day to scribe a scroll per 1,000 gp of the scroll's market price. Since the price for a scroll is caster level times spell level times 25 gp, a 1st-level spell scribed on a scroll costs only gold pieces. How long does it take to scribe the scroll?

The minimum time to create any magic item is one day; see page 242 in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.

Just what does a small character have to do to use a bastard sword? I have gotten the impression that a halfling can use a bastard sword as a two-handed weapon provided that she has a Strength score of 13 or better and she takes Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Bastard Sword). Correct?

There is no Strength requirement to use a bastard sword. A bastard sword is a Medium-size weapon. It follows all the rules for Medium-size weapons, except that a Medium-size creature wielding the sword in one hand suffers a -4 attack penalty with it unless she has Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword). A Small creature using the sword in two hands is just like a Medium-size creature wielding it in one hand. So, your halfling (or gnome) suffers a -4 attack penalty when using the sword two-handed but suffers no attack penalty if she has Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword) and uses two hands; because the sword is Medium-size, a Small character cannot use it one-handed.

When you gain skill points or a feat, do you have to spend the points or choose the feat right away? Is there any way to save skill points or feats?

You have to spend skill points or choose feats as soon as you get them.

There's no reason for DMs to be absolute about this. If you're running a campaign and one of your players just can't decide right away, it's okay to let the player wait awhile, but the character must spend the points or choose the feat before the character in question gains another level (just delay all

POWERPLAY

BY BILL BALDWIN

"Stop hitting me with that battle-axe—it tickles!"

Dwarf: A 1st-level dwarf barbarian with 20 Constitution and the Toughness feat has 23 hit points when in a rage and can maintain his rage for 10 rounds. If he wears light or medium armor, his fast movement ability negates the dwarves' primary disadvantage of only having a 20-ft. base movement rate.

the benefits for the new level until the player spends the points or chooses the feat).

My group's having some difficulty with the Expertise feat. What happens when you use Expertise along with Two-Weapon Fighting? Do you get the Armor Class bonus from Expertise once for each weapon? Once for each attack? What if you use the total defense option or the fight defensively option? (Or is Expertise just another way of fighting defensively?) If you have five or more ranks in the Tumble skill, you get a bonus to defensive fighting or total defense. How does that work with Expertise?

Any attack bonus you devote to defense with the Expertise feat (up to your base attack bonus or +5, whichever is lower) applies as a penalty to all the attacks you make until it's your turn again—including attacks of opportunity. You get the defense bonus only once, no matter how many attacks you make or how many weapons you use (it, too, remains until it's your turn again). For example, a 9th-level fighter with a base attack bonus of +9/+4 has Expertise, Two-Weapon Fighting, and Ambidexterity. If the character uses a light weapon in her off hand, she'll get three attacks, each at a -2 penalty: +7/+2 with her primary hand and an extra attack with her off hand at +7 . If the character claims a +2 bonus to Armor Class from Expertise, her attack bonuses become +5/+0 and +5.

As "Sage Advice" has pointed out before, you can't use Expertise and total defense at the same time. (You can use Expertise only as part of the full-attack or attack actions.)

You can fight defensively only when you use the full-attack action (see page 124 of the *Player's Handbook*), but if you do, you can use Expertise along with it. (Because fighting defensively is mentioned in the Expertise feat description on page 82 of the *Player's Handbook*, some people think Expertise is just a better way of fighting defensively, but that's not true). When you use Expertise and fighting defensively together, you simply add up all the Armor Class bonuses and attack penalties. Note that both Expertise and defensive fighting provide dodge bonuses to Armor Class. Dodge bonuses, unlike most other bonuses in the game, stack (see page 119 in the *Player's Handbook*). If the character in the previous example decided to fight defensively, she would add another +2 dodge bonus to Armor Class (for a total of +4) and an extra -4 attack penalty, which would reduce her attacks to +1/-4 and +1. The combination of Expertise and defensive fighting isn't very efficient.

If the character in the example also had 5 or more ranks in the Tumble skill, her dodge bonus from fighting defensively would be +3 instead of +2, and her total Armor Class bonus would be +5.

Since Expertise is not the same as fighting defensively, your Tumble ranks don't help you when you use Expertise without also fighting defensively.

The description of the Escape Artist skill gives conflicting bonuses to the DC for escaping from a rope restraint. The small table says the bonus is +20 to the binder's Use Rope check. The paragraph immediately below that says the binder gets a special +10 bonus on her Use Rope check. Which is correct?

The binder gets a +10 bonus. This error was corrected in the second printing of the *Player's Handbook*.

The description for the Spring Attack feat says the attacker's movement during a springing attack does not provoke an attack of opportunity from the defender. Does this mean a character with Spring Attack can disregard the problems associated with approaching and attacking an opponent with reach? This could be a huge benefit. Does the Spring Attack feat help you run away? Or must you move both before and after your attack to avoid attacks of opportunity?

When you use Spring Attack to attack a foe, your movement during your turn does not provoke attacks of opportunity from that foe, even if your movement takes you through several squares the foe threatens (as would be the case for an opponent with reach).

When or how often you move during your turn is irrelevant, but you must make an attack to get the benefit. Only the opponent you attack becomes unable to respond to your movement with an attack of opportunity; that opponent's allies suffer no such restriction.

If you become a multiclass character by adding a prestige class, do you have to keep the two classes at roughly even levels to prevent an experience penalty?

Taking a prestige class doesn't cause an experience penalty; see page 27 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Can you take levels in more than one prestige class? How do all these levels affect your experience?

You can take any number of prestige classes, provided that you qualify for them. Prestige classes do not impose multiclass experience penalties (see previous question), no matter how many prestige classes you have.

The rules say a barbarian must spend 2 skill points to gain the ability to read and write any language he is able to speak. Is this per language, or once for all languages? What happens if a barbarian multiclasses?

When the barbarian spends 2 skill points, he becomes literate in every language he speaks and in any language he learns to speak in the future.

Barbarians who become multiclass characters automatically become literate in all languages that they currently speak and in any future languages they learn.

The granted powers for some of the cleric domains (such as Travel and Magic) specifically say effectiveness is linked to your cleric level. Other granted powers (such as Protection and

POWERPLAY

Sallia, the Teleporting Monk

A human monk with 18 Dexterity and Wisdom, the Dodge and Mobility feats, and 4 ranks in Jump and Tumble can tumble up to 20 feet through enemy ranks to attack an opponent in the enemy's rear. She has a +8 skill modifier to her Tumble check. Enemies who get attacks of opportunity will have to hit AC 22 (+4 Dexterity, +4 Wisdom, +4 Mobility) or AC 23 (+1 Dodge). When she gets to 2nd level and adds 1 more rank to her Jump and Tumble skills, she gets +11 (+2 synergy bonus for Jump) to her Tumble check. When she reaches 6th level and adds the Skill Focus (Tumble) and Spring Attack feats, she can tumble 20 feet through enemy ranks, attack, tumble back 20 feet to her starting position, and then move 10 feet away, all in a single round.

Strength) do not; they just say "your level". In the case of a multiclass cleric, would domain granted powers that don't specify "cleric" level be based on character level instead?

A cleric's domain abilities are class abilities and as such are based on cleric level only.

I was wondering if a cleric would be able to turn an outsider, such as a lawful good cleric attempting to turn a demon? Under the old rules, you could do that (with difficulty), but I can't find any rules for it in the core books.

Turning only affects undead. Some cleric domains allow you to turn, rebuke, or command creatures other than undead (see pages 162–166 in the *Player's Handbook*), but no domain grants that power over good, evil, chaotic, or lawful outsiders.

You could reintroduce this power into your campaign by creating a new feat, domain, or prestige class.

When you have a domain power that lets you turn or rebuke something other than undead, does using that power count against your daily uses to turn undead as a cleric? Can you trade a use of undead turning for a use of some other turning, or vice versa?

No on all counts. A domain turning ability is separate from the cleric's undead turning ability. You track the daily use of each separately, and you can't trade uses between abilities.

Say you have a cleric with access to the domains of both Sun and Water. If the cleric used a turning attempt to try to turn a fire-based creature, could he use a greater turning (the Sun domain power) to instead destroy the creature? The greater turning description says it destroys undead creatures instead of turning them. Can this be used for other things a cleric can turn, such as the power granted by the Fire or Water domain?

The greater turning ability affects only undead, not other creatures the cleric might be able to turn.

What happens when undead are destroyed in a turning attempt? Is there a difference between undead destroyed in a regular turning attempt and undead destroyed by greater turning?

In either case, the creatures' bodies are destroyed and reduced to dust or ashes. DMs can describe the process any way they like. I suggest an effect just like the *destruction* spell: The creature is slain and its remains are consumed by holy fire.

If a cleric with an Elemental domain or the Plant domain takes the Extra Turning feat does the feat add to all turnings and rebukings?

The rule is pretty clear: The Extra Turning feat applies to turning undead (see pages 32 and 42), not to other kinds of turning.

That said, there's no compelling reason to limit Extra Turning to undead. I recommend that DMs allow characters to apply the Extra Turning to other types of turning. Each time you take Extra Turning, you apply it to either undead or to another kind of turning your character can perform. You don't increase both by picking the feat once. If you have the Sun domain, any successful turning attempts you make against undead destroy those undead, even if they're extra attempts.

I understand that if an opponent is grappled and pinned, that opponent is not helpless and therefore not subject to a coup de grace. But if that same opponent was rendered unconscious, could you perform a coup de grace as an unarmed attack? If so, what would the damage be?

You are correct: Pinned characters are not helpless and are not subject to coup de grace.

You can use an unarmed attack for a coup de grace. The target has to save as noted on page 133 of the *Player's Handbook*. Note that you can deal normal damage with an unarmed attack by taking a -4 penalty to the attack (you automatically hit when you deal the coup de grace, so the penalty isn't relevant). If you choose to deal normal damage, you'll eventually kill a helpless foe even if the foe keeps making successful saving throws.

Will a character ever die from environmental effects such as heat, cold, starvation, or suffocation? These effects only deal subdual damage.

Once a creature is rendered unconscious by an environmental effect, that effect begins dealing normal damage instead of subdual damage. The *Dungeon Master's Guide* includes this rule for heat and cold (see page 86 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), but it also applies to thirst, starvation, suffocation, and smoke inhalation.

What are the effects of fighting underwater?

Here are some rules Jonathan Tweet and I cooked up:

If you don't have a swimming speed (or a *freedom of movement* effect), you suffer a -2 penalty to attacks and damage when underwater. Any slashing weapon, blunt weapon, claw attack, or tail attack also inflicts half damage (subtract the 2 points first, then take half of the rest and round down). Remember that a successful hit still inflicts at least 1 point of damage.

Even if you have a swimming speed, you inflict half damage with slashing or blunt weapons (but not claws) unless you have a *freedom of movement* effect.

The other players in my group insist that my lawful good cleric cannot cast the 1st-level *doom* spell. Is that correct? I know my character can't cast *inflict light wounds*, but where is the rule that says I can't cast *doom*?

There is no such rule. Perhaps the other players are thinking about the

rule that bars clerics from casting certain spells that have an alignment designator (see Chaotic, Evil, Good, and Lawful Spells on page 32 in the *Player's Handbook*). *Doom*, however, has no alignment designator, and a cleric of any alignment can cast it.

The *inflict light wounds* doesn't have an alignment designator either, so any cleric can cast that as well. What your lawful good cleric cannot do is use the spontaneous casting rule to cast *inflict light wounds*. As a good cleric, you can spontaneously cast only cure spells.

I have always assumed that a *fireball* caster is not affected by his own work, but another player pointed out that the spell description doesn't actually say that. What's the verdict?

The spell produces a ball of fire that fills a 20-foot radius spread. If you place the *fireball* so they you're within the spread, you get burned. Note that if you place the spell so that the spread's point of origin is more than 20 feet away from you, you won't be caught in the spread. In previous editions of the game, a *fireball* filled a fixed volume and the effect would always fill that volume if it could, reshaping itself if necessary. This often caused the caster to be caught in the effect. The current version of the spell doesn't do that; it follows the rules for a spread effect on page 149 of the *Player's Handbook*.

POWERPLAY

"Ha ha, made you look!"

Rogue: A 1st-level rogue with 18 Charisma and 4 ranks in Bluff gets a +8 to her Bluff check when feinting in combat. If she succeeds, on her next attack her opponent loses his Dexterity modifier to AC, and she gets to add her sneak attack damage.

The *fireball* spell inflicts 1d6 points of damage per caster level, to a maximum of 10d6. The *delayed blast fireball* spell deals 1d8 points of damage per caster level, but there is no maximum listed. Is there a maximum?

The *delayed blast fireball* description in the first printing of the *Player's Handbook* is wrong. The spell inflicts 1d6 points of damage per caster level, to a maximum of 20d6. This has been corrected in the second printing.

Is the description for the *color spray* spell correct? Subjects with less than 5 HD will spend 1d4 rounds blinded before becoming stunned. This would seem to indicate that they could fight with a 50% miss chance and then suddenly regain their vision, but be stunned and unable to act.

Yes, there's an error. The effects don't occur in order; they occur together. The list of effects should read:

Up to 2: Unconscious for 2d4 rounds, also blinded for the first 1d4 rounds, and also stunned for the first round. (Only living creatures are knocked unconscious.)

3 or 4: Blinded for 1d4 rounds and stunned for the first round.

5 or more: Stunned for 1 round.

This is official errata.

Note that many creatures, such as undead, cannot be stunned.

Does a stunned character always drop anything he is holding?

Yes, stunned creatures drop what they're holding, as noted in the *Player's Handbook* glossary (page 282). D

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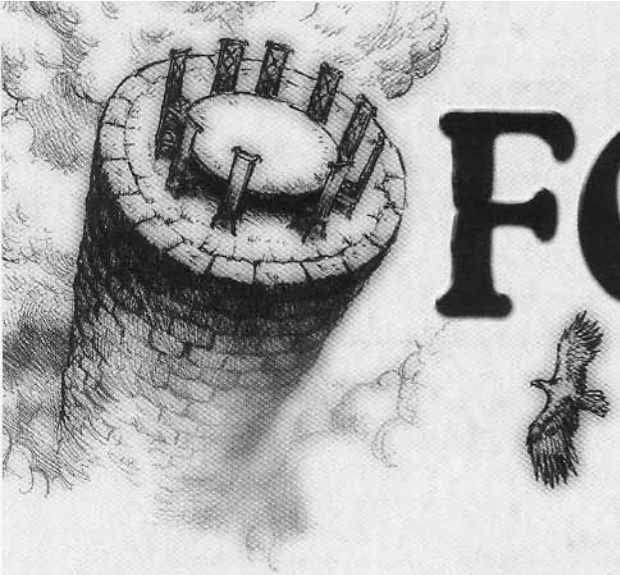

FORUM

Question of the Month:
What role does religion play in your campaign apart from clerics and other divine magic?

Send email to: forum@wizards.com

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Pros & Cons

I always found it hard to take D&D seriously. Its roots as a wargame were so obvious, with everything from thief abilities to saving throws crudely bolted onto the side. I played D&D for kicks but turned elsewhere for my serious roleplaying.

But now, wow! I can't wait to start playing again. With a single mechanic to remember, the rules can fade into the background, and the characters can take their rightly deserved place on centre stage—high fantasy at its best.

Yet, despite the simplicity of the mechanic, it has more detail and covers more situations than most of the many, many games I have played.

My favorite features?

One, the way in which characters and monsters are now treated the same—monsters are no longer a mere run of statistics but can be just as cunning and skilled as the adventurers.

Two, the sorcerer! A more medieval replacement for the psionicist, I assume, as well as being a wizardly alternative for those who just couldn't live with the concept of memorizing spells.

My only gripes?

One, (and I'm going to get a lot of flak for this), why is there no evil equivalent of the paladin? Surely evil gods can inspire dedicated, unholy warriors just as well as good ones? If the evil deities can grant power to their clerics, they would surely be able to empower their most devoted martial followers.

Second, why does the bard, this jack-of-all-trades, have fewer choices of martial weapons than a rogue? Perhaps I'm looking at it the wrong way around, and perhaps the rogue's arsenal should be cut back. After all, even the most violent incarnation of the rogue should find a morning star more than adequate.

Even if you are determined to stick to 2nd Edition (and I bet you drive a Model-T ford, as well), the new book is worth the investment simply for the bits and pieces you can lift out of it, things that even the most passionate defender of 2nd Edition must acknowledge as needing fixing.

Some people have already decried the new edition as tantamount to blasphemy, quite possibly without even seeing it in full. If they are prepared to junk it without even reading it, the rest of us are better off without them. Excellent work, Wizards of the Coast!

Shaun Lewis • Douglas, Isle of Man
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Writing Your Own Ticket

I have been DMing for sixteen years, and the best house rule I have created is that my players earn experience points for written documents, stories, maps, or other nonroleplayed contributions to the game.

While most of the game is roleplaying the characters and being involved in the storylines, they have added a ton of depth and detail to their characters and their world. I had one player who wrote the equivalent of a novel about what his character did in downtime, or the history of his character, and it created so much more of a detailed and believable roleplaying experience than those who did not. The experience points gained from all the stories, geneology, and maps from this player added up over time, but it never created an unbalance or an unfair advantage for him.

The amount of XP depends on the detail of the story or map, or of the usefulness to the game (if someone donates a miniature or a gaming aid). Normally a story nets around 1,000, maps 2,000, and so on. It's usually not enough to change a character quickly, but over time it adds up and does make a difference.

Eventually every character passes on, but the players themselves feel like it's their world too, which explains why I've had the same participants in my Tuesday night game for the past ten years, and they make new characters when it's time. Incidentally, the highest the characters have been in terms of levels is 15th level. That took six years of real time, lots of stories, and staying alive in the game. Now the stories are part of history and the players have nostalgia when the newer characters interact with the places and events from the previous generation.

The best part is everything they contribute gives me that much more to work with from a storytelling standpoint. The players are hooked when the new characters find something legendary, even if it's the old elven innkeeper who the previous characters knew.

In closing, this rule has made a better game for all concerned, and it gives the players a good reason to do a super job of chronicling their characters lives.

Cob Constantz • Address Withheld

Little Women

In response to the Forum "Question of the Month" in *Dragon Magazine* #278 ["What house rules have you invented for your D&D game?"]:

In my campaign, female humans and demihumans have a -2 penalty to the initial rolled Strength score but have the gender-exclusive ability to bear children. I prefer the women in my D&D campaign to have the same relative body size and proportions, relative to the men, that men and women have in the real world.

Jean-Philippe Suter • Randolph, NJ

Feat Adjustments

I've just started up my first D&D campaign in fifteen years (yes, you read that right) and although I am trying to stick pretty close to the published rules, a few house calls have been put down on paper. Here are my rules for feats:

1. It bothered me that a rogue would have to wait until 3rd level to get Weapon Finesse, even though he would fulfill the prereq (+1 base attack) at 2nd level. So characters can select feats that they do not have the prerequisite for—they just can't use it until the prerequisite is filled. (In other words, take Weapon Finesse at 1st level, and you can start using it at 2nd level).

2. It bothered me that, if you could take the Craft Magic Arms and Armor feat, you were probably 6th level, which meant you could make +2 items. I lowered the prerequisite for Craft Weapons and Armor to 3rd level. I also allow non-spellcasters to take this feat—they can't satisfy the prerequisites for most items, but they can still make items with simple enhancement bonuses. (I really wanted a dwarven smith who couldn't cast spells but who could forge magic chainmail.)

3. It bothered me that Skill Focus added +2 to a single skill, while numerous other feats added +2 to two skills (only Alertness does this in the Player's Handbook, but there's a half-dozen more in *Star Wars*). So now Skill Focus adds +3 (again, as in *Star Wars*), or you can take a house feat called "Talented" that lets you add +2 to any two related skills (like Listen and Spot, for instance). No skill can benefit from Talented more than once, but you can stack Talented with Skill Focus (just as you could stack Alertness and Skill Focus: Spot).

Jason Tondro • Madison, WI

Psion You Crazy Diamond

Psionic powers are and always will be part of my campaigns. I've always played psionic PCs, and with the new multiclass rules you can bet almost all my PCs will have a little psi power.

The real question is, will [I use] the "official" psionic rules. I, like many others, have been tracking what little is known from various websites, and I don't like what I've seen. The system appears to be nothing more than alternative magic rules, apparently a spell-point system. Magic is not psionics, and psionics is not magic. They are different!

Yes, I know a similar system would be easier for newbies to play, but I'd bet pissing off all of us established players would make it difficult for those newbies to find groups to play in.

As I started, psionics will remain in my campaign, but if I have to I'll create my own psi-rules. I've already converted L5R to D&D to replace Kara-Tur in my Forgotten Realms campaign, and Gamma World to add to my Spelljammer campaign (yes, some of us do still play Spelljammer).

Mike Briggs • Address Withheld

Psionics Forever

I for one am looking forward to the official release of the new psionics rules, although there will be house rule changes. I am ever hopeful that the new rules will be more in tune with those of 1st Edition, much like many of the aspects of the new edition.

My own home-brewed campaign world of Teara Adan has had a heavy psionic influence since the game first started more than sixteen years ago. And now three DMs and a multitude of players later, it is still going strong and enjoying the freshness of the new edition of D&D.

Psionics continue and will forever play a role in my campaign, as it is the world of sixguns, sorcery, and (even more so now) psionics.

Christopher Rheinherren
Dunwoody, GA

Weighing In

I have been a D&D gamer since 1981, and with the release of the new edition, I look back and recall my disdain for 2nd Edition when it was released. I soon began playing it however, as it was a vast improvement over the unwieldy 1st Edition. Therefore, when I began to hear the rumors of a new edition, I was not very concerned. That is, until I began to read of the many changes that were going to be instituted. I was beginning to become afraid of what Wizards of the Coast was going to do to my beloved game.

Well, I purchased the new edition books as soon as they came out and was completely blown away. I see it less as a new edition and more as pure Dungeons & Dragons. It is a step that the game should have taken back in 1989. It has the rules and structure that make it very much like a wargame, yet it has the options for a wide variety of characters and options (both combat and otherwise) that the previous editions lacked. It really is everything I had ever hoped for. Kudos to all who contributed! It is a wonderful system! I was so excited that I actually got a subscription to *Dragon* for the first time ever (though I had been a fairly consistent reader for many years).

That being said, I would like to address an issue that has been thoroughly neglected in each edition. Has anyone in any of the offices of Wizards of the Coast ever picked up a real weapon and discovered how much it weighs? Your weights for most of the small weapons and swords are not far off, (if you decide to include the weight of the scabbard, when applicable). However, the weights for maces, hammers, and many other weapons (especially bludgeoning types) are unbelievable. I could accept the existence of dragons easier than I could the existence of a 15-pound sword. Granted, there were "bearing swords" used in parades in centuries past, but they were never used for real combat. Real weapons intended for combat simply could not be that heavy—quickness was a necessity, and a heavy weapon causes fatigue to quickly set in, even in the most battle-hardened warrior.

A two-handed hammer weighs about 4 pounds and will do more damage against plate armor than a 25-pound sledgehammer simply because of the velocity with which it can be swung.

Certainly, this is a fantasy game, but when you have the opportunity to put "realistic rules" in place without detriment to the enjoyment of the game, I think that it is important to do so. After all, your weights for armor are quite

accurate. Weapon weight does have an effect on the game, especially when your armor-clad priest (with slightly above average strength, as an example) is trying to make it out of the dungeon with a backpack full of gold, a sack full of silver, and his 15-pound mace slowing him down. Perhaps some of your readers can provide some feedback.

Michael Brown
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Confused

After running my first couple of gaming sessions under the new edition rules, all I can say is, "Wow!" Unfortunately, there are both negative and positive connotations to that exclamation. First, the positive:

As far as the mechanics of the game are concerned, they work great! It is simple and easy to teach to new players (Also, kudos on the *Player Character Sheets* and *Conversion Manual*. They made converting existing characters and NPCs much easier.) The d20 system, once you get adjusted to it, makes game play faster, and makes my job as DM a lot easier (" . . . when in doubt, DC 18.") There are now guidelines on how to handle just about any situation, from spotting ambushes to creating magical items (it might not have always been the way I would have done it, but oh well). Overall, a job well done.

Now for the negative: I've been playing D&D for almost twenty years. My current playing group has been together for four years. We unanimously agree that we have never read a more confusing set of manuals in our lives. The artwork in the books is great, but as far as the content, there are thirty-year-old IBM ISAM database manuals that are more straightforward. We actually had to sit down together as a group and go over sections of the manuals to ensure that each of us had the same understanding of the rules. We couldn't believe such a simple, and relatively elegant, game system could be explained in such a confusing manner. The manuals refer to things such as feats and attacks of opportunity early on, without bothering to define what these things are. Many of the examples actually made the rules less clear. The order in which the information was presented was also made it confusing. My group and I found that if we read the *Player's Handbook* chapters out of order (1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 6, 10, 11, 2, 3, 6, 9) that rules made a lot more sense because you then understood what the heck you meant by a "Spot check."

I don't mean to complain too much; overall I approve whole-heartedly of the new edition and really do enjoy playing it. However, you might want to review the text of all three manuals again before doing another press run. There is a lot of room for improvement there. Thanks for listening to my rant,

John Brown • St. Louis, MO

Charismatic

In my game to be, players built their characters using the point system advocated by the RPGA for the new edition. I enjoy this system very much as it keeps players honest and does not penalize the honest players who happen to roll low during character creation. At any rate, this point system has produced some very modest scores that I am pleased with. But there are always exceptions . . .

One player insisted on achieving the highest Strength at the expense of other attributes he viewed as lacking in significance—Charisma for example. This got me to thinking about the value of that ability and how I might make it meaningful for the group. Let's pretend you want to get your house painted. You start interviewing contractors. What are the things you take into account? Do they have references, are they licensed, is the foreman skilled, what is the crew like, and so on? I submit that when having your house painted you might be willing to pay a little more for professional, courteous service.

Maybe the same thing should apply to adventurers. For example, the hamlet of Wobbly Vale is being ravaged by Wompus Reavers, the unholy scourge of Seti Highlands. Constable Bert is charged with hiring a group of heroes to rid Wobbly Vale of Reavers. He interviews two groups. The first seems competent, but he gets a bad vibe from them. Especially from that fighter, who seems more intent on how much loot he will be paid and the availability of maidens with low moral character. The second group is friendly, competent as well, but he senses in them a genuine concern for Wobbly Vale. With a good feeling about the group he offers them the job as well as a few incentives.

When determining the reward PCs will receive for a task, maybe the GM should take into account the party's average Charisma and levels. If the average Charisma/level exceeds that of the person doing the hiring, they will receive the module's prescribed reward and a bonus as well. If the party's Charisma/level is lower than the person doing the hiring, they will be viewed in a less favorable light and will receive a reward less than the listed job.

Or look at the ability modifiers in the *Player's Handbook*. Average the party's Charisma and give the listed modifier as a percent bonus. Example: The reward listed in the module is 500 gp. The party has an average Charisma of 12, which is a +1 attribute bonus. So give them a +10% bonus for a total reward of 550 gp simply because the group strikes their employer as being so swell.

Scratch the Vulgar—Ftr2, Charisma 6 to Laird the Bold—Ftr 1, Cha 13, "Hey, punk, you got my gig! Is Constable Bert afraid that I will excite the women in this miserable village with my powers of luv? What? You got the job and he offered a reward 20% higher than what was offered to me? Time to get me a Miss Manners scroll."

Christian Walker • Address Withheld

Gun Talk

[In response to Dan Pack's letter in "Scale Mail" from issue #279.] My background is as a writer for the gun magazine produced by the late Buckskin Press in Big Timber, Montana. Originally called *The Buckskin Report*, it folded into its sister publication, *Single Shot Rifles*, to become *The Black Powder Report*. I also was a reenactor for the American Revolutionary War representing the British as a member of the 64th Regiment of Foot, and the Americans as leader of the Company of (Blind) Scouts—we all wear eyeglasses.

Now as to your problem of unbalancing a roleplaying game by the introduction of firearms. While the magazine gave some good limitations, I'd like to offer additional ideas. They are based on the question "Which era firearms shall you permit?"

The Flintlock Era: These are muzzle-loading guns with the ignition caused by a sharpened rock (flint, obsidian) that

scraped metal shards from a fire-hardened frizzen into a pan that has gunpowder in it. These shards spark red-hot and set off the pan powder that converts to a hot gas transmitted by a small touch-hole to the main charge behind a round ball.

There were two types in the era from before the French and Indian War to until the late 1840s in the American West: smooth-bored barrels and rifled barrels. The smooth-bores were muskets and pistols that used pre-made paper cartridges. Each could be loaded in 15-20 seconds depending on the experience of the handler. British troops were required to get off five shots in 1 minute and 15 seconds. The main problem with these were that they were very inaccurate beyond 25 yards. To quote a cliché of the period, "The first shot went high, the second low, and where in hell did the third one go?" The large balls—from .62 to .715 were heavy but bucked the air so that at 200 yards they quite literally bounced off enemy uniforms.

Rifles, on the other hand, took up to 1-1½ minutes to reload as they used individual components: powder, patching, and ball. This became a problem after the first shot, as the powder "fouled" the barrel, making it harder to seat the ball against the main charge—and the shooter *had* to clean it or else the gun would blow up.

So, there is your first way to limit unbalancing: Guns could be rapidly reloaded with little effect against individual targets, or they could cause your PCs to have insufficient time to reload.

The Caplock Era: One problem with flintlocks was that high winds and moisture put them out of action. In the 1820s, an Englishman came up with percussion caps. These replaced the flint, frizzen, and pan with a dog-leg hunk of steel that screwed into the touch-hole with a tube that was surrounded by a cap. When the hammer dropped onto the cap, it crushed the explosive that caused hot gases to fire the main charge.

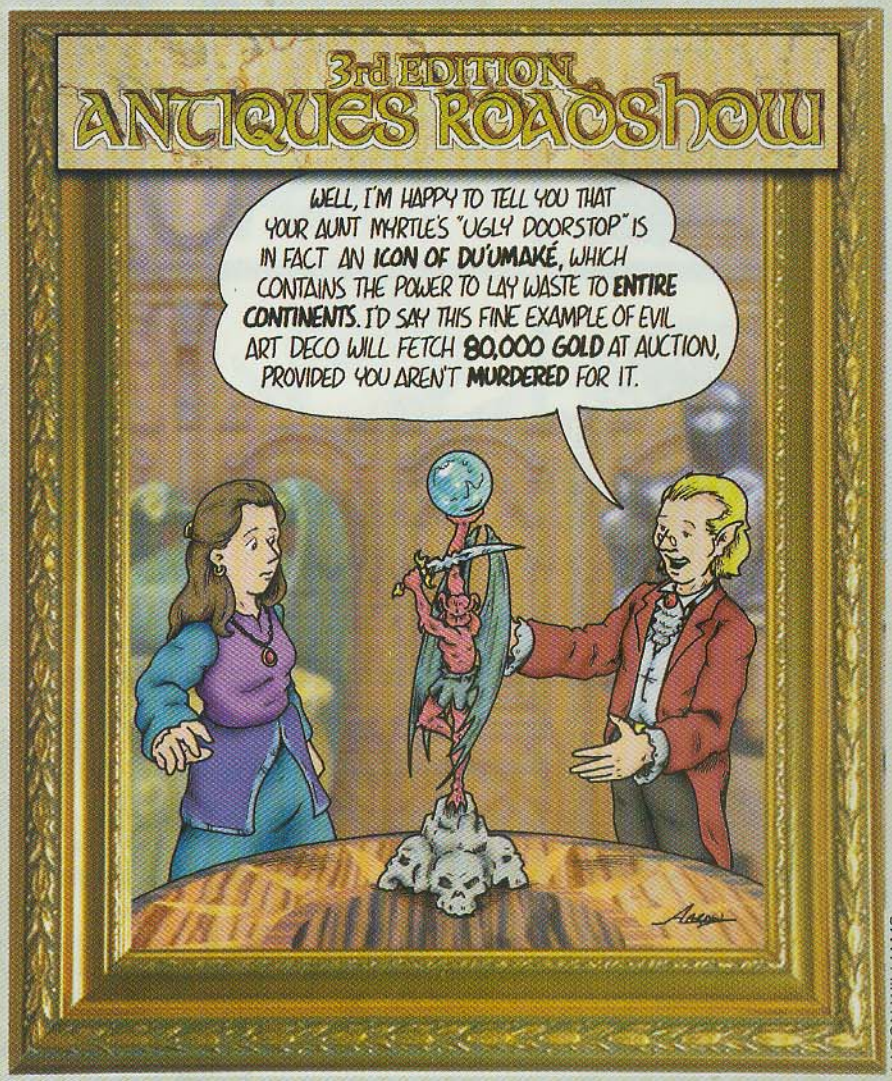
The caplock didn't decrease the reloading time, but did innovate the revolver. First Colt and later Remington created a cylinder that could fire five or six shots as fast as the shooter could pull back the hammer and pull the trigger. The only problem was that once the gun was empty, then what? This is the reason that Clint Eastwood, in one of his movies, walked down a street dismantling his revolver to replace an empty cylinder with a loaded one. Of course, if the bad guy popped out during this process, Eastwood's character would have been "Swiss cheesed."

It should be pointed out for game balance that location can be used. While the caplock caught on in the 1830s in the Eastern U.S. where there were many trading posts and general stores nearby, this did not occur in the fur-trapping Western area until the mid-1840s, as there was only a single re-supply (the summer rendezvous). If you lost your caps, the gun was useless. Thus, while your PCs might have firearms, the question of re-supply can come into play. Yes, they might get lead, powder, and caps easily within major population centers, but they might be unable to do so in the hinterlands. Another way is to limit the revolver cylinder to only the one within the gun. When that's used, back to archery and swords.

The Cartridge Era: While your letter indicated an interest in Stephen Kenson's "Age of Steam," for game balance I think you should not use these weapons although they are contemporary. Imagine your PCs coming against orcs armed with Civil War Spencers or Winchesters along with Colts at their belts. Roman Nose did just that at Beecher's Island, and it was a massacre. The Indians thought they could ride into the soldiers while the latter reloaded after the first shot. Surprise, surprise. Cartridge guns, even the single-shot Remingtons and Sharps rifles, would definitely unbalance the game.

There are many historical firearms books in your local library. Ask the research librarian to help you select a few. I hope the above can help you with your gaming.

Jeremy A. Michele • Billings, MT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AARON WILLIAMS

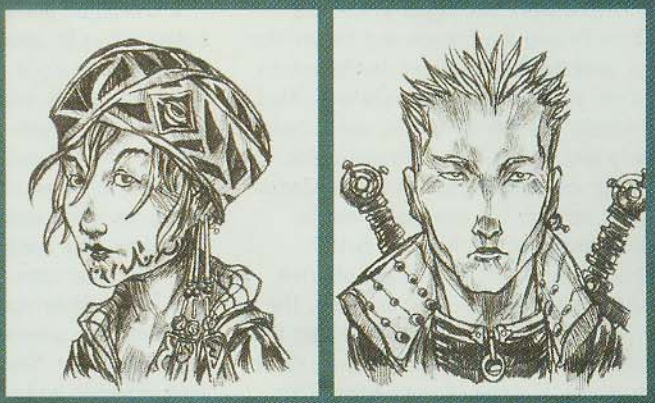
PC PORTRAITS

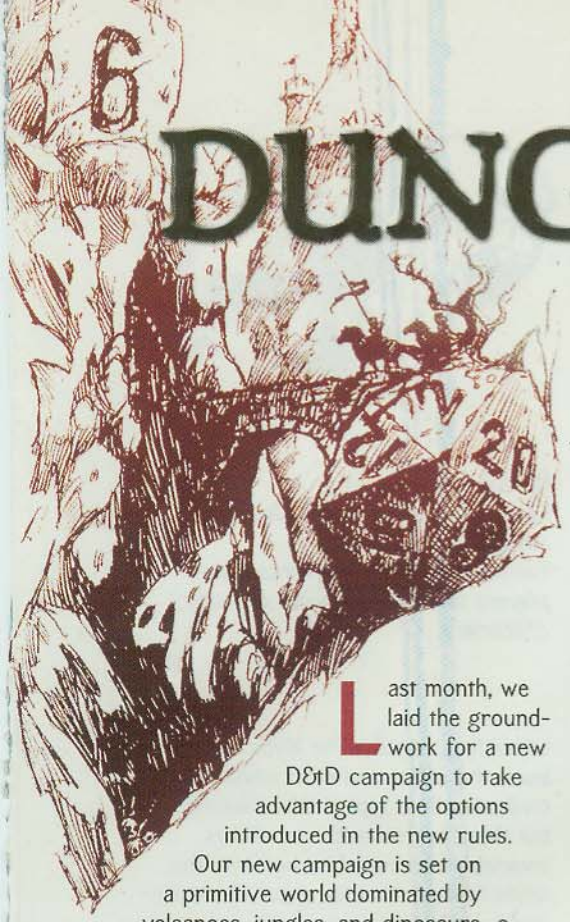
ILLUSTRATED BY VINOD RAMS

Psionicists

My visual inspirations for these characters came from a few sources. The modern "Goth" look, for the leather, straps, piercings, and little tchotchkes. I looked at headdresses and costumes from other cultures for some of the characters that are definitely not "Goth."

I really like the industrial "steampunk" look, so I put some of that in the characters as well. Anyone with that heightened mental ability should not look completely normal. To have that type of power must mess with their heads. Just look what happened to poor Tetsuo in *Akira!* *-Vinod Rams*





DUNGEONCRAFT

Let's Take it from the Top

by Ray Winninger

Send email to: scalemail@wizards.com

"Dungeoncraft" c/o *Dragon Magazine*
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Last month, we laid the groundwork for a new D&D campaign to take advantage of the options introduced in the new rules.

Our new campaign is set on a primitive world dominated by volcanoes, jungles, and dinosaurs—a sort of "lost world" environment that is home to primitive tribes and dangerous reptiles.

Way back in issue #257, the third installment of "Dungeoncraft" suggested that after selecting a "hook," the simple feature that should help root the campaign in the imaginations of the players, the next step in building a new campaign setting is to flesh out some rough details on the government and politics of the world at both the local and national levels. Hopefully, the details you create will arm you with everything you need to start fleshing out the town or city that will serve as the players' "home base" in the early part of the campaign. Although there are many valid approaches to building a campaign's infrastructure, let's try to nail down the political situation as the next step in building the new world.

The last time we tackled politics, the focus was on the local level, since local politics have a greater impact upon the early events of the campaign. This time, let's start thinking about the bigger picture and use those details to help bring the small stuff into focus. This world is different from the usual D&D campaign on the local level. The customary D&D "home base" (a small, safe town or stronghold overseen by a noble) certainly doesn't fit the "rough-and-tumble" vision, and we need a better view of the whole world before we can be sure of how to replace it.

Thinking on a larger scale then, the primitive nature of the world suggests that there is no such thing as a large and powerful nation. Holding together such a union is always difficult and inevitably requires skills and technologies that don't exist on this world. It's difficult to imagine a government operating a large nation without first mastering basic road-building techniques or inventing a fairly sophisticated bureaucracy. Most of the inhabitants of this new world are far too uncivilized to possess such knowledge.

Given the details already mentioned, it seems clear that civilization on this new planet consists of a loose collection of tribal cultures—perhaps a whole world analogous to the situation in North America prior to the arrival of European settlers. To make things more interesting for game play, each tribe has its own identity and customs. Guaranteeing that each tribe is different from its rivals makes it much easier for the various cultures to come to life in the imaginations of the players. In fact, as we think about the sort of information we need to create for each tribe, it seems that there is probably very little difference between these tribes and the concept of a "race" in the D&D game.

We'll want to create between four and seven tribes to get the game started. In other words, just enough to provide variety, but not too many to flesh out quickly and cleanly. Although the planet is undoubtedly home to many more cultures, these few are the only ones near the region where the bulk of the action will be set for the first few months of play. Because we envision the tribes to be conceptually close to the D&D game's races, an obvious source of inspiration are the D&D races themselves. We can meet a nice chunk of our needs by simply adapting existing D&D creatures to the world and tribal structure that we have in mind. Retuning the classic D&D races is a time-honored technique for lending a world its own flavor. Great examples of this technique can be seen in the DRAGONLANCE and DARK SUN settings—DRAGONLANCE reinvented halflings to help establish a less Tolkienesque feel, while DARK SUN reworked most of the major races to create an alien atmosphere.

The first step in adapting the D&D races is to recognize their essential natures. The various races that appear in the *Player's Handbook* were each selected to fill a particular role, and each was inspired by a strong tradition of mythology and legend. A successful reworking taps into this lore and leaves the essence of the creature untouched, while providing new details to fuel the players' imaginations.

Before tampering with races, you should understand that players expect certain characteristics from each of them, and failing to satisfy these expectations is likely to cause confusion. Populating your game world with brutish elves cuts sharply against the grain of D&D tradition. After all, it's easy enough to create a beastly race of

ELVES AND HALF-ELVES

Essential characteristics: *Old, wise, artistic, connected to nature, ancient civilization, rich traditions.*
Function in D&D: *Elves are a great font of knowledge. Players visit them when they need to learn something, particularly about the ancient past.*

GNOMES

Essential characteristics: *Inquisitive, ingenious, mischievous.*
Function in D&D: *Gnomes create unusual inventions that add flavor to the game world. Their creations can also help the players overcome specific obstacles.*

HALF-ORCS

Essential characteristics: *Outcasts, savage.*
Function in D&D: *Half-orcs allow players to create "fish-out-of-water" characters.*

HALFLINGS

Essential characteristics: *Resourceful, clever, opportunistic, curious.*
Function in D&D: *Halflings live among other societies, taking advantage of whatever opportunities come their way. Halflings provide a good neutral source of adventure, either as people who need protection or as the instigators of problems PCs must solve.*

DWARVES

Essential characteristics: *Resilient, attuned to the underworld, strong sense of honor, master crafters.*
Function in D&D: *Like elves, dwarves are a source of knowledge. Their specialties are the underworld and magic weapons. Dwarves also give the players access to important skills and allies in dungeon environments.*

folks with pointed ears and not call them elves. Presumably, the only reason you'd use the label "elf" to describe your creation is to convey something about the race's nature and behavior to your players.

Here are some reflections on the essences of the various D&D races. You might disagree with a few details here and there, and that's fine. The important thing is that you collect your own thoughts before beginning your redesigns.

Elves and half-elves: Elves are often the oldest and wisest race inhabiting the typical D&D world. Their extraordinary lifespans and the remarkable age of their civilization generally combine to result in a very advanced culture that is rich in tradition. As a result, elven society is often dominated by the fruits of this culture, such as poetry, song, and other artistic endeavors.

An important characteristic of elves that stems from the advanced age of their society is an unusual affinity with the mysteries of life. Typically, many centuries of study have allowed the elven civilization to penetrate several of the great secrets of the universe. This is why elves often make such great wizards and sorcerers, and why elves are usually responsible for so many of the magic items found in the typical D&D setting. This same characteristic also explains why elves often share some sort of special bond with nature.

In most campaign settings, elven society is consumed by an air of impending tragedy. The elves usually boast the oldest and most advanced civilization in a typical D&D setting, but these same worlds are always invariably dominated by humans. This tends to imply that the great elven civilization is in its twilight years and slowly waning to make way for a great age of humanity.

Dwarves: Most often, dwarves are inextricably linked to the underworld. Dwarven citadels lie beneath stony mountains or at the bottom of deep dungeons. Their affiliation for these environments tends to define dwarves as master crafters. Since mining and stonecutting skills are so often the key to its survival, dwarven civilization learned to place a high value on these arts long ago. While elven society is often focused on studying and understanding the world, the society of the dwarves is committed to reshaping it. Dwarves believe that the process of creation is the single thread that unites all the great mysteries of life, and they believe the only way to penetrate those mysteries is to become a creator. This is why they'd rather tend a forge than study poetry, and why they are better known as crafters than magic wielders.

Typically, beyond craftsmanship, dwarves respect nothing so much as personal honor. The concepts of self-sacrifice and heroism that fuel this attitude stem from the unique hardships and rugged environments that dwarves face from childhood. To a dwarf, life is a test that must be faced justly. The temptation to unfairly improve one's

station at the expense of another is a cancer that threatens dwarven civilization. It's this characteristic that explains their tendency toward the lawful alignments.

Halflings: Halflings are distinguished by their opportunistic mindset. They've never found the motivation to build the sort of elaborate empires favored by elves and dwarves because they prefer to let other races do such things and then take advantage of all the opportunities those empires provide. As a whole, the halfling race is always on the move, finding a way to fit into whatever society can offer them new gains and the comforts they enjoy.

Individual halflings tend to be amazingly resourceful and dedicated. Often curious to a fault, halflings can be lead on the path of adventure at a whim.

Gnomes: Like the dwarves, gnomes tend to be defined by their craftsmanship. The difference is that gnome creations emphasize function over form and exhibit an uncanny technological sophistication. Whereas the dwarves are master smiths and stonecutters, the gnomes excel at creating mechanical gizmos, alchemical concoctions, clockwork machines and various other complex gadgets. They can't resist the urge to tinker, prod, and explore. The gnome civilization has evolved a unique philosophy that lies midway between those of the elves and the dwarves. Gnomes simultaneously favor understanding and reshaping the natural world, and it is the unique combination of these beliefs that is always pushing them to the fringes of any art or science they decide to explore. Thus, gnomes are talented spellcasters (unlike dwarves), but they are not content to simply unlock the secrets of magic (like the elves). Instead, they're constantly tempted to innovate and create unusual new spells.

Half-orcs: In most D&D game worlds, half-orcs are the ultimate outcasts. Orcs tend to see them as soft and weak, while humans usually regard them as coarse and ugly. The real value of the half-orc as a game concept is that it allows players to take on the role of a "fish out of water" or a "bad boy made good." Assuming the role of an outcast is an unusual challenge that often leads to lots of interesting role-playing opportunities. Similarly, characters who must learn to overcome their own essentially violent natures to become great heroes are a staple of fantasy fiction and comic books (think Worf on Star Trek or Wolverine from X-Men). The idea of playing such a character is very appealing.

Now that we've boiled down the standard D&D races, we can identify possibilities for the "lost world" and rule out those that don't fit. Right off the bat, for example, we'll rule out halflings. The tightly knit, clannish societies of this world are on a constant quest for survival, and they are unlikely to allow halflings in their midst. The opportunist mindset of the halflings would be detrimental. They simply don't exist on this world. You shouldn't be afraid to take a similar step when designing your own world. Just because a character race is listed in the *Player's Handbook* doesn't mean you have to offer that race in your campaign. In fact, if you don't have a clear idea of how the race fits into your plans, you're better off excluding it. If one of your players should select a race you're not completely comfortable with, you'll only be forced to expend a lot of valuable creative energy inventing details you're not ready for.

Similarly, the gnomes' fondness for wacky spells and inventions doesn't fit. Not only do we envision a primitive world that is far less advanced than the common D&D setting, we're also looking to create an atmosphere of savagery and danger. The congenial, carefree nature of the gnomes might spoil that.

Elves, dwarves, and half-orcs remain. To this list, we add three human tribes. This assortment should work out just fine because it will insure that there are as many human options as non-human. That should help reinforce the notion that the balance of power is still tipped in favor of humanity.

That wraps up another installment. Next month, we'll flesh out the five tribes that will dominate the early phases of the new campaign and present guidelines for using the information in the *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guide* to draw up the game information necessary to turn these creations into full-fledged D&D player races.

DEAR DUNGEONCRAFT

Dear Dungeoncraft,

Help! I'm embarrassed! I can't seem to control my players. Whenever I'm the Dungeon Master, things start out well enough, but as soon as the action starts, my players get excited and all start shouting at the same time. On several occasions I've started to describe the new rooms they are visiting only to discover later that half the party didn't want to go in the same direction as the other half—I'd missed the others' instructions among all the various requests flying at me. Once combat starts, everything really spins out of control; half the players are making their dice rolls before I even know what's happening. What can I do?

—Deaf in Detroit

Dear Deaf,

First of all, don't be embarrassed. Yours is a common dilemma.

The real solution to this problem is to teach your players good gaming habits; the way to do that is to enforce some discipline. For now, ask the players to elect a team leader or "caller" and make it clear that only he is allowed to communicate the party's intentions to you. In other words, if the players want to argue about which path to take, they should argue it out amongst themselves (without involving you) before the caller announces the group decision. Like any good leader, he's responsible for making sure the players reach a consensus, not you. If the party's still finding it difficult to make up its collective mind, a couple of monster ambushes in the midst of the arguing should teach them the error of their ways.

Of course, this doesn't mean that the other players aren't allowed to speak to you. Whenever a player wants to take an individual action, she should still address it to you as usual. If you find that you are getting overwhelmed by these requests, feel free to ask all the players to make initiative rolls (as if they were in combat) and resolve their requests in strict initiative order.

Speaking of combat, once it starts you should enforce a strict turn order based on initiative. No one should be allowed to do anything (even offering advice to another player) until it is her turn to act.

For now, you should strictly enforce these guidelines. After a while, your players will get used to them and get the hang of the game, allowing you to ease off and adopt a less formal approach.

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WHEN YOU BECOME ULTRA-POWERFUL, YOU TEND TO GET ULTRA-POWERFUL PROBLEMS.
BEHOLD! HERE IS THE NEW POWER!
um... Hello?
ATTEND, YOUNG GODLING! KNOW THAT THERE IS A WAR ONGOING BETWEEN THE GREAT POWERS!
NO KIDDING?
AYE! A WAR FOUGHT WITH THE VERY MAGICS THAT BIND THIS TISSUE OF LIES YOU CALL REALITY TOGETHER!
THE SACRED WAR IS NOW LOCKED IN A DEADLY STALEMATE!
YOUR POWER COULD WELL DECIDE THE OUTCOME! YOU MUST CHOOSE!
CHOOSE?! CHOOSE WHAT?!
GOOD OR EVIL? LIGHT OR DARK? ORDER OR CHAOS?
STRIPES OR POLKA-DOTS
WHAT?!
THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE FIGHTING ABOUT?! HA! CALL ME WHEN IT'S SOMETHING IMPORTANT LIKE - CHOCOLATE OR VANILLA - OR PAPER OR PLASTIC! NOW PUSH OFF!!
SHE.. SHE MOCKS THE SACRED WAR-!
AND I SUPPOSE YOU THINK THIS IS FUNNY?!
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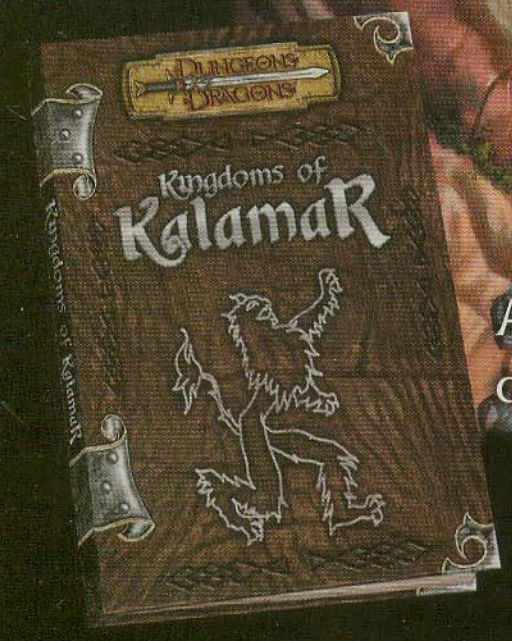

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